MUSIC FROM THE MAZE.

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MARCUS S. C. RICKARDS

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MUSIC FROM THE MAZE

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BY

MARCUS S. C. RICKARDS

AUTHOR OF "CREATION'S HOPE," "THE EXILES," ETC.

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PRELUDE.

A SUNNY day with tearful moods,
A landscape with the vernal look,
Starred hedgerows, faintly flushing woods,
Gold sallows silvering by the brook,
Green, daisied dells, where many a tongue
Rejoiced that Earth was gay and young;

I watched them sadly, for I felt
Deflowered, untuneful, and too old
For scenes where youthful pleasure dwelt,
And gaiety alone was told—
When wings swept by me, and a voice
Seraphic carolled out, "Rejoice!

"Art thou the senior of hoar Earth
And duller than her wintry death?
For long millenniums ere thy birth
She hath re-found her tuneful breath,
And flowered, 'mid April smile and tear.
Be thou as young each opening year!"

Upstarting with a thrill and flush,
I sought the angel, but in vain.
What if it were the flitting thrush
Now mad with music in the lane?
I know the spirit of the Spring
Inspired the note and sped the wing,

To quicken in my sluggish heart
Green buds of joy, pure flowers of thought,
Fair vistaed views, unborn of Art,
Ethereal flights, of self untaught;
And crowning all, a fairy chime
To echo down the slope of Time.

LABYRINTHS.

A TWILIT tangle thro' which many stray,
And others thread their way—
Thorns intertwined with flowers;
Sad marshes here, and there enchanting bowers;
A wild, to conquer which tasks human powers;
With intermittent gleams,
And hints that naught around is quite the thing it seems.

Such is the World wherein the infant eye
Opens to earth and sky.
No certitude is here—
Only the room for play of hope and fear;
The light with shadow blent, the sweet with drear;

Merely the instinct sure
That One will pilot all who struggle on—no more!

Such largely, too, is Nature's double face
To all who there would trace
A moral unity,
And proof that all live on who seem to die.
One day we vote them true, the next a lie.
Thro' puzzle-paths we press,
To laugh and weep o'er clues that mock our empty guess.

Such is the sacred Book where every mind
Its proper Truth may find—
A waste, or flowery dell
To each, as he delights in heaven or hell;
Quickset with brambles to the infidel;
Nor easy to the man
Of faith, who yet can trace thro' devious paths one Plan.

And such, too, is the hidden life of each—
A dim and difficult reach,
Where lurking Right and Wrong
In form Protean, with seductive song,
Woo the vext pilgrim as he creeps along;
A mazy solitude
Of keen or bitter woe, and pleasure many-hued.

Alas! alas! yet were it otherwise,
Were all to heart and eyes
Quite plain, were men not free
To take or leave—to follow or to flee;
Where could be individuality?
Where room for moral growth?
Where goad to war with self, or spur to conquer sloth?

Thus He Who formed us can our temper test,
And educate our best;
Nor ever will the true
Fail of the hint and gleam, or cease to hew
The tangle for a path to the clear view;
While they who darkly rove—
Still they are God's, and He is Pity, Truth, and Love.

LISTENING TO THE CORNCRAKE.

QUEEN of the darkness, Sleep! they now are quelled
Who battled for so long against thy crown;
Behold thy loyal liege-men who rebelled,
But one by one laid every weapon down!
O happy people thus to win thy grace!
O gentle magic that can now bewitch
So many a frolic form, and fiery face,
And tuneful voice, and nodding tree and flower!
No heart in mansion, meadow, grove, or ditch
But wanders to its heaven this moonlit hour,
Save one that vainly woos, and one that mocks thy power!

I am the suitor, fanned for long by air
Whose perfume thro' my open windows swept;
Enchanted by a nightingale's despair
Till love, like hope, grew weary, and he slept;
Charmed by the wistful stars, the tender moon,
Far silver meads and vales, too lovely all
For even eyelids heavy for thy boon.

I close them now upon my couch, but find
Them impotent to yield me to thy thrall,
For thro' the unforgotten fields doth wind
That mocking one to bar thy calm from sense and mind.

O how he winds, as if he knew right well
For all his scorn that quietude and rest
Mean gradual subjection to thy spell!
So, like the fiend-forsaken one in quest
Of vain repose, with futile discontent
He wanders thro' dry places, hidden and fleet,
Tracked by a rough perpetual lament,
Down ditches domed by eglantine and may,
Bright kingcupped meadows, faintly gilded wheat,
Grass-fields, to be full reaped at dawn of day,
Where now forsaken scythes gleam 'mid the new-mown
hay.

Thro' all he wanders, skulking as of old
His fathers did in the dear halcyon time,
When nights were silver all, and days all gold,
And even their call one note of a sweet chime—
When oft I vainly crouched to watch them pass
Or, wild with joy, bent o'er the freckled spoil
Left by the mowers in the wavy grass;
Or sporting 'mid the stubble found one still,
Tho' overdue to some far orient soil.
Enough! I wax more wakeful thro' the thrill
Born of sweet Memory; let Fancy task her skill.

That call—'tis like a note, harsh if alone,
Recurrent thro' a heavenly nocturne;
A fugitive foreboding quickly flown
Before the heart its bearing can discern;

A heavy-wingèd thought that yet doth speed
Down twilit tangles of a dreamy brain
Elusively; the one unhappy deed
That echoes sadness thro' a lovely life;
The Nemesis men fear, but shun in vain;
The jarring of an intermittent strife;
The croak thro' homely haunts of a complaining wife.

Or shall I deem that heavenly landscape those
Bright fields of Christendom down which there range,
Like yon wild feet that never find repose,
The wandering Jew's, whose travail hath no change;
Or shall it figure the pure Christian view
And him the sceptic spirit? let the scene
Now image Tartary who learnt to rue
Grim Tamerlane first near and then afar;
Or the fair plains of Europe, long serene
Till restless Buonaparte their calm did mar;
As when there crosses heaven a baleful wandering star.

Now will I feign a seascape calm like this,
Moon-silvered too, a saffron sky-line o'er
Not wavy grass, but ripples green that kiss,
Yet with harsh grating chide, a pebbly shore:
And now a sadder simile—yon plain
Dewy and fair is tearful twilit Earth;
That jarring note the mystery of Pain;
I on my bed the hearer who might sleep
To dream in lonely bliss, and idle mirth,
Did not the plaint of eyes that wildly weep,
And hopeless hearts that throb, a restless circuit keep.

Kind Sleep, in league with Pity from above,
Can that rude rebel be in thine employ,
A Jesuit to tease me into love
Toward all souls who fail of rest and joy?
For, brooding o'er their wrong, I, tired out now,
Thro' his reiteration win thy grace.
At length, at length, thy soft enchantments throng
My weary brain; thought, feeling, sound, and sight,
Are blent in sweet confusion; thine embrace
Is round me, powerless in thy gentle might.
Earth melts into a heaven of golden dream—Good-
night!

ODE TO A SPARROW.

THOU common-place of feathered form,
A tribute to thy worth
From one who sings of shine and storm,
Sea, river, heaven, and earth!
Who, dull and dusky tho' thou be,
Would no more dream of slighting thee
Than lovers of mankind would scorn
The lowly for the better born.

A happy day for thee is this,
When Prose hath elbowed Song;
And men cry down patrician bliss,
To right the People's wrong—

A fitting time to sing thy praise,
Thou proser 'mid sweet meadow lays,
Thou rank plebeian of the streets
Whom everybody always meets!

Yet 'mid tame tones a mellow sound
  May break a prosy spell;
Oft in the vulgar have I found
  Virtue that pleased me well;
And 'tis the seer's prerogative
To weigh the worth of all that live,
Uncurtaining for blinder eyes
Full many a beautiful surprise.

They wrong thee, the pale city-folk,
  Befogged for half the year,
Who deem thee grimy with the smoke
  Thro' which they vainly peer;
Strange to thy rural guise, and mode,
And ways in lane, and field, and road,
Thy wedded love 'mid eave and thatch
The while thy mate doth brood and hatch.

Bravado, born of wrong, doth bid
  Yon pinions pertly quake;
A flouncing girl, or baby chid
  Might give that wilful shake!
No landlord's license wilt thou ask
In dust to roll, in sunshine bask;
Defying, like a son of toil,
Unfair monopoly of soil.

O heed not the disdainful crew!
One eye doth fondly bend
On lovely tint and chastened hue
Harmonious in their blend.
The far May-carol one keen ear
Doth quit with thy shrill clamour near,
Brisk feet have left (tho' guests have come)
The social board with thy due crumb.

Rare beauty and sweet song above
Not always win the heart;
And homely forms and tones we love
When brighter things depart.
Change alters not, nor Time destroys
Life's simples, Nature's sturdy joys—
Air, sunshine, ocean, field, and tree,
Herb, daisy, hedgerow, spray, and thee.

AN AGAPEMONE.

I KNOW a vale—all lovers know it well—
Where joy and beauty weave a twofold spell,
To charm the child of nature who doth stray
From the world-trodden way
With one in harmony of heart and will;
Or fired with heavenly ardour, if alone,
That nothing be unshewn:
For Love his hidden wealth will scarce reveal
To eyes that sympathy doth not unseal;
No glance, no peering, if the heart be chill
Can win his rapture-thrill.

Where is the vale? you ask. Nay, seek it out!
My pencil hath no hues to clear your doubt.
Can any point the way whereby to find
Light's glory, to the blind?
Yet will I paint my picture. Mark you this!
'Tis a sweet haunt where sky, and wave, and earth
Blend in a tuneful mirth—
A watered dingle, whence the eye can round
Rare beauty to the dim horizon's bound—
Where all doth woe, and ill, and wrong, dismiss,
That Love may squander bliss.

He lords it ever here: the glowing sky
Doth view the rippling sea with amorous eye;
Ere he bids earth farewell, the fiery sun
Clasps her his smile hath won;
The watching stars, that thro' her curtain peep,
Wink eyes of tender meaning, and forget
Calm duty, to coquette;
Impassioned flowers are fondled by the breeze,
The while with honeyed lips they fool the bees;
The stream doth mirror brooding clouds, who weep
That they apart must keep.

Heaven could not, would not, harm a spot so fair:
No vapours mass, no storm-cloud gathers there:
The whirlwind recollects itself, to blow
Elsewhere the hail or snow.
The showery line is drawn outside; nor here,
Save for the rainbow's orange, red, and green,
Would rain be ever seen.
The tide seems always swelling to the beach
With wave and zephyr blending in soft speech;

The sun doth only stint his golden cheer
That moonlight may appear.

The flowers adore their kind—and me, to judge
From jealous looks that seem to owe a grudge
To wingéd hoverers that oft incline
Their curious eyes to mine.
No child could woo me with more roguish glance,
No lady set a more bewitching snare
To trap me unaware.
They languish now, and then they toss their head;
And my belief is that the scent they shed
Is nothing but a silent sweet romance,
Love's tender utterance.

I worship them, but doth the violet know
His heart, who haunts the bank to watch her blow?
The sorrel, cowslip, thyme, do I reveal
To them the love I feel?
Can we, in primrose language, e'er explain
That all her sunny eye would have us learn,
We heartily return?
When bluebells, lest we should forget them, thrill,
Can we convince them we are suitors still?
Yet the shy look, the perfume's soft caress
Oft make me hope they guess.

I watch them here, and fancy their desire
Fulfilled when I bend lowly to admire,
Or learn from them what in their gentle way
Nature doth bid them say.
Yet oft I wonder if we please them best
In freeing them to soothe the human heart
By the diviner art

Of meek self-sacrifice and sympathy,
That with us they may languish, fade, and die;
And so I gather them, at home to rest,
Or better, on my breast.

The warblers here, each with a happy mate,
'Twould task my muse their amours to relate;
Wren, robin, linnet, bunting, wagtail, lark,
With many a finch I mark;
Love's lunatics, no madhouse could restrain,
Are here let loose; and while they romp and rave,
The cuckoo plays the knave.
Yet Love so counts it all his own preserve
That her depravity his cause doth serve:
Fired with his glow, the foster pair are fain
Their foundling to sustain.

Nor do they sing to woo their brides alone;
I hear their love for me in every tone,
Inspired by mine for them; and well they know
My feelings ebb and flow.
The mavis thrills me from a heart of joy;
The merle's sweet melancholy knells my gloom;
The robin's chime doth bloom
My spirit's paradise with flowers of hope;
Beneath the skylark's harmony I grope,
A darkened soul an angel would decoy
To some divine employ.

No shower of lovelier music ever flowed
From tuneful chaffinch than to-day's sweet ode,
Like falling stars that silvered on my sight
One keen November night.

The linnets on the heath so clearly chime
That Fancy doth a purling brook recall,
Or tinkling waterfall;
The bullfinch's low cadence lingers on,
Like music from dear voices that are gone;
The greenfinch yearns for a celestial clime
To crown the loves of Time.

The flies' soft hum, the music of the bees,
Are like the voices borne upon a breeze
That sweeps the fields of memory to bring
Back many a perfumed thing.
All is transfigured here, nor would I harm
One hoverer; and all that sport and fly
Are human to my eye:
To brush away a gnat would be to chase
From my horizon some long-vanished face,
To wave a moth aside with wilful arm
Would melt some bygone charm.

The butterflies, O how they mingle here,
And toy and languish 'mid a wild career;
So fairy is each plume, so bright the hue,
That to my dreamy view
They look like happy seraphs from the sky,
Who, blending in high rapture hover round
A consecrated ground;
That if one fail to love or joy, a glance
At them may fire the heart, or make it dance;
That souls may preen their halcyon wings, and try
Thus splendidly to fly.

As love's sweet music lingers round this place
I carol here to move and cheer my race;

For every bard hath his peculiar gift
To lighten and uplift;
And mine is to reveal kind Nature's heart—
To prove how every feature of her can
Hold intercourse with man.
I shew how all that meeteth sense hath wings
To waft him to the Good above all things,
And try to mantle thoughts that gleam and dart
In a choice robe of art.

All glows and sparkles here where'er I turn;
The Moses in me oft sees bushes burn;
The Joshua bids sun and moon stand still,
Or rise and set at will;
With holy ancients here I share the sight
Of Seraphim who tutor me with lore
From the celestial Shore.
Were but my conscience purged, my spirit pure,
Glory might cling to me, and none endure
To meet my face awhile, so strangely bright
With visionary light.

Oft hath my Grecian heart felt sprites around,
Blithe masqueraders on enchanted ground;
Seen nympths in fainting flowers, and frolic gods
In many a tree that nods;
Heard the clear streamlet tinkle in reply
When the soft music of a Naiad spoke,
Or Dryad in some oak;
Known thro' the night-bird's agony the tale
Of Innocence, whom Passion did assail;
Watched serried legions in the glowing sky
Flame forth to faint and die.

My vale doth also charm the crowd that shuns
The realm of Fancy, and avoids her sons.
Yet hither drawn, the poetry that lurks
In every mortal works.
Music upbubbles from dry wells of song;
Unwatered eyes, like torrid summer-rills,
A heavenly fountain fills;
A tender pathos penetrates their tone
From whose heart-language sympathy hath flown,
The while Strength learns that to be always strong
Doth the true nature wrong.

Here loiters Age, and lo! the furrowed face
Steals youthful splendour from the lovely place;
If mourners front its sunshine, every tear
Like dew doth disappear;
If bitter pain the heart or body rack
'Tis solaced here; the while a healing balm
Steals from the gentle calm,
Grief is forgotten 'mid the sylvan joy;
And O, the wealth in store for girl and boy!
Here children troop, and hive the sweet they lack,
Before they saunter back.

'Tis like a hospital, where, sick of hate,
Men come, to find the fever soon abate:
A convalescent home, whence all depart
With tone of mind and heart;
They who had hotly quarrelled save for this,
Have caught here in each other's countenance
A reconciling glance;
Here women lose the spite they come to nurse;
Here Balaam stays to bless, tho' brought to curse;

Here faltering friendship seals unbroken bliss
By an absolving kiss.

Or shall I say an epidemic reigns
For ever here, that genders aches and pains,
The ache that yearns to medicine distress,
The pain that pines to bless.
Hearts whole and loveless leave here ill at ease,
Infected with the spirit of the clime,
To break o'er woe and crime.
Schemes that naught baffles, plans that none can daunt
Are oft conceived in the prolific haunt
Thus tainted by the one supreme disease,
A mortal vainly flees.

Melt not my fond illusion, spare the breath
That would remind me of woe, strife, and death!
O whisper not that Earth can hold no rest
For many a troubled breast,
That sad November wrecks the wealth of May!
I tell you that if wrong hath marred this spot
I have discerned it not.
Death hath bewitched me if he ever passed
Across its happy marge from first to last.
The flies *seem* ever bright, the warblers gay,
The blooms without decay.

"Ah!" do you urge? "since joy and beauty veil
Their light on earth, 'tis but a fairy tale;
Ay, and for this too, that unshadowed Love
Haunts only Heaven above."
Well, have it as you like! I do but ask
A human heart, one prompt to thrill and throb
To laughter, sigh and sob—

A pulse alive to perfume, sight, and sound,
A spirit that finds Heaven in common ground,
For even you in sunny love to bask,
And revel in my masque!

ODE TO A YELLOW WAGTAIL.

FLAMING ripples have I seen
Laugh along the ocean green;
Sunny waves across the corn
Wanton in a breezy mirth;
Smiling beams that gild the morn
Shoot thro' mists to gloomy earth;
Yet thy golden mates and thou
Sport more gleefully I vow.

Thee I single, for thy ways
Blithe and trustful win my gaze.
Round the browsing kine they skip,
While along the flowery glade
Thou all daintily dost trip,
Like a happy, innocent maid.
Come! while I the palm award
To my favourite of the sward.

Ah! I note thine anxious look
In the mirror of yon brook:
Who could vaunt so rare a charm,
Such a form, such fairy grace,

And know nothing of alarm
Lest a rival in the race
For the crown of loveliness
Make her splendour look the less?

Radiant one! with thee in view
Cowslips tremble for their hue;
As a belle's début doth make
Other beauties bridle up,
Glaring envy now doth wake
In the gaudy buttercup;
While the primrose pales in fear
Of dishonour, with thee near.

Thou art quaking! dost thou dread
Lest by glitter half misled,
I should cheat thee of the prize—
Thee less bright than some of them,
Yet to sympathetic eyes
Worthier of the diadem?
Empty tremor, for I see
What I value most in thee!

All, fair-fashioned, bright and smart,
Thou alone dost fire my heart,
With the light of liberty.
Free as thought and feeling, thou
Flittest between earth and sky,
Like my airy fancies now.
Thee I crown! in gratitude
Brighten my despondent mood!

Linger! for our other gold
Spreads the wing it ought to fold.

Silken tresses turn to grey,
Glowing joys escape like dreams,
Glittering treasure will not stay,
Honours faint like sunny beams.
What! hast thou too glanced and gone,
Like the loves that round me shone?

Glory! ye are dancing back,
Hope and promise in your track—
Hope of a diviner joy
Here, however fugitive;
Promise, nothing can destroy,
Of far more than Earth can give.
Gloom now alternates with glow;
Freedom can but come and go.

TO AN OWL.

THOU tyrant of the hollow tree,
The dusky wood, the twilit lea,
Prithee awake or sleep!
The king of night should drowse by day,
Or at the least allow his prey
Their carnival to keep.

Why wrapped in slumber wilt thou blink
Half-hooded eyes, and make them slink
In terror from their feast?
Ah! empty question, for I see

Grim Nature hath conferred on thee
The dower of bird and beast.

The hawk, whose realm is sunny light,
The feline prowler of the night,
Blend in thy mode and make.
Action is varied by repose:
Thine eyes are watchful when they close,
And sleepy when they wake.

Past-master of duplicity,
That vigilant yet curtained eye
Hath won thee twofold fame.
Minerva's bird is reckoned wise,
And yet stupidity allies
To her tradition, shame.

Inaptly so in my esteem,
For dullards lack that cunning gleam;
What fool is half so sly?
Nay, let me fancy thee a type
Of many a one whose judgment ripe
Bears fruit in sophistry—

A votary of Earth and Heaven,
Whose worldly wisdom tries to leaven
True godliness with gain.
A crafty referee whose guile
Will two contenders reconcile,
The booty to retain.

A sage diplomatist who leans
This side and that, yet plainly means

To fool them both at length.
A solemn judge who lifts a paw
To lay down and enforce the law
Of tyranny and strength.

And from a human point of view
Thou mockest mouse and mole and shrew
As our poor race is scorned—
By Time, who, neither slow nor swift,
Leaves play for hope and room for shrift,
To none, surprised or warned—

By Chance, who, from a careless throng,
On ground of neither right nor wrong,
A few doth single out—
By Death whose quiet step doth near
The dupes of Day's unshadowed cheer
To tease them into Night.

OUR TALE OF LOVE.

BENEATH the blue we whispered,
Eyed by the glowing sun;
And dreamy earth woke into mirth
O'er two hearts blent in one:
The goldfinch wooed a lovely mate
From the pink orchard-spray,
The while we lingered by the gate,
And went our happy way.

Yet heaven looked half forbidding;
The holy sun grew faint;
A veiling mist vowed while we kissed
That neither seemed a saint.
But laughing earth with rosy face
Acquitted us of harm,
For nature hath a proper grace
And passion a pure charm.

And when our mingling spirits
Drew rapture from above,
The mist rolled by, the sun and sky
Shed glory on our love;
The fairy finch divinely sang,
And plumed a purer gold;
While loud the echoing landscape rang
With Love's sweet story told.

TO A KESTREL.

HAWK that hovers o'er the lea!
Cradled in a spiring tree,
Art thou to thy pedigree
Faithful, in descending?
Wast thou nurtured thus on high
For an earthly destiny,
Or for the blue golden sky,
Ever upward tending?

Balanced now between the two,
Thou dost look both false and true;
Impotent to bid adieu
For a while to either.
Which befitteth thee the more—
Low to sink or high to soar?
One who knew thee not before
Well might answer "Neither."

Sinking, thou wilt follow all
Fashioned for an earthly thrall,
Their's who hurled aloft would fall
To a native station.
Soaring thou wilt near a clime
Too ethereal and sublime
For a thing of Space and Time,
Save in aspiration.

Canst thou not maintain that poise,
Proof against the twin decoys;
Charmed by both the rival joys,
Yet with neither mingling?
I am cast for heaven and earth;
Hath not each its proper worth?
May I grace the double birth
Thus, by neither singling?

Joy! an omen—swift as thought
Swooping downward thou hast caught
Nether prey, and I am taught
Earth should not be slighted.
Musing, let me quit repose
For due sustenance, and close

Bravely with terrestrial foes
From the outlook sighted.

Ha! thou art on high again;
Verdant grove, and spangled plain,
Spread a flowery lure in vain
While the sunbeams love thee.
Glittering eyes with golden rings,
Flaming feet, and ruddy wings,
Stamp thee for the nobler things
Beckoning above thee;

Ay, and make me feel they claim
Mortals dowered with the same—
Eye of fire and wing of flame
Mark men out for mounting.
Human in the happy mean;
Hovering mid the twofold scene;
Yet while scorning naught terrene,
Heaven the birthright counting.

NOCTURNAL BLISS.

QUIET Night! when all the mortal
In our nature wins repose,
We are wafted to the portal
That disturbing Day doth close.
Mid thy silence, at the border
Of the wondrous spirit-deep

Stands a rosy-mantled warder
With a golden key—soft Sleep.

Shining angels troop to greet us,
Guardians of the soul from birth;
Dearest of delights! they meet us
Who have left us lorn on Earth.
Thro' their happy haunt we wander,
Mid undreamt-of joys revolve;
Riddles which by day we ponder
Darkly, thro' their lore we solve.

Yet, methinks, we may not travel
Nightly to the Realm above,
Mortal meshes to unravel,
Mysteries to plumb by love.
Sleep doth bid the spirit enter
If to the bright gate she soar;
Yet her hope and yearning centre
Oft below the radiant door.

What if then the lovely legion,
Pitying our impotence,
Wing its glory to the region
Where we lie enthralled by sense?
Many an eve we sink to slumber
Leaden-winged, and wake at dawn
Lightened from the clogs that cumber;
Conscious of a veil withdrawn;

Rich in some immortal token
Of the tutelage above;
Sure of many a link unbroken

In the riven chain of love.
So I dare to hold, believing
Sense and spirit oft combine,
Tender Night! to gild our grieving
Thro' some alchemy of thine!

ODE TO A SPOTTED FLYCATCHER.

FAIRY I have wooed for long
Unsustained by look or song,
Who each flowery May's return
Doth my overture reject!
Unrequited love doth burn
All the brighter for neglect:
So I trill a lay to thee,
Tuneless tho' thou art to me.

Oft have I in friendly quest
Called to greet thee in thy nest,
Hoping that thou wouldst display
Many a secret joy, but tho'
Courtesy required thy stay
Thou didst start, and glance, and go:
E'en my shadow makes thee flit
From the pale where thou dost sit.

Empty caution, vain alarm!
Or is it that thou wouldst charm
An admirer on to more
Ardour in the hot pursuit,

Rightly deeming we adore
Most amid a hopeless suit?
Conscious thou art dull and plain,
Wouldest thou more homage gain?

Nature doth our lives equip
With the means for fellowship;
Beauty-spots of youth in each
Now have gone, and left us grey:
Both, beneath yon elm or beech,
Love to dream an hour away.
Hungry, thou art prone to fly
Down and up, and so am I.

Thine the body's flitting; mine
The hid soul's unrest divine:
Both would capture all with wings
Floating near us while we dream:
Thou, unheeding airy things;
I, elusive thoughts that gleam—
Fairy joys that flash and glance
Like the giddy May-fly's dance.

I have music, thou hast none—
True, but mine will soon be done!
Silently, at Nature's beck,
From the scene we wing our flight,
Autumn gale and wintry wreck
Quenching sunshine and delight:
Here to-day, to-morrow flown;
Now, together—then, alone.

TO A BROOD OF NUTHATCHES.

O THE red-letter days of life!
When, truant from all toil and strife,
We gain a sylvan spot!
To light upon some loveliness
Whose beauty hath a charm to bless
The tame or troubled lot.
High festivals that naught can mar,
Be they in memory's calendar.

And one of them divinely beamed
That summer-morning when ye seemed
At hide and seek to play.
The sapphire sky, the emerald dell,
The flowers, the music, wove a spell
That beckoned me to stay,
And watch you circle round a beech—
Now near at hand, now out of reach.

Entranced, a glory o'er me crept
Akin to his, who, while he slept,
The shining ladder viewed.
Bright angels were ye, up and down
A golden sunbeam, at whose crown
Of tender light He stood,
Who guards our being from above,
And thro' Earth's beauty tells His love.

Oft comes that vision back to me,
The lovely scene, the sungilt tree,
  Your robe of red and blue,
While in the dazzling glow ye shone;
And then, alas! when it had gone,
  Your simple form and hue.
For Angels vanish with the Light
That chariots them into sight.

A REFLECTION.

DOST thou disdain the joy of Earth?
Then bless the Power Who gave thee birth
For any wealth of heart and mind
That lifts thee o'er the vulgar kind—
That kindles the transcendent glow,
Without whose ardour none can know
The truest told to human heart;
Or fitly the high lore impart.

But art thou fashioned for the bliss
Of commoner delight than this?
Belaud thy Maker, bless Him much
That thou art never out of touch
With all around thee—never shunned
By darkness that will not be sunned—
Nor falsely reckoned far above
The world of fact, the toil of love.

The blind are happy void of sight,
And wealth unwon few prize aright:
Thy loveliest vision, finest tone,
Are now, as ever, thine alone.
Fret not! the fairest blossoms bloom
In sunshine shadowed oft by gloom.
'T might dwarf thy best, the double dower—
Both sympathy and lofty power.

TO MY SCHOOLFELLOWS.

DEAR friends, who in the dawn of life
My joy and sorrow shared!
How have ye mid the noon-day strife
And contemplation fared?
I hear of many; some I meet;
But most I never, never greet,
Tho' Fortune leave you wingèd feet
By pleasure only snared!

Ah! how we played mid shower and sun
To win a boyish fame:
Have any of you victory won
In the world's larger game?
Or better, scored a triumph bright
In the supreme unfaltering fight
Of darkness with the hosts of light,
Where failure ends in shame?

We frolicked over sea and land
  Aflame to do and dare.
We built our houses on the sand,
  Our castles in the air.
The chainless energy and will,
In some, I doubt not, lingers still:
But Fancy's fire, hath that grown chill
  Mid life's prosaic care?

Re-kindle it, that heaven-born flame,
  Or earth may look too cold!
The glow that warmed you then, will shame
  You out of gloom when old.
Thro' life's bleak day heap fuel up!
To let the bubbling matin-cup
Of Pleasure cool before you sup
  Were foolishness untold.

For some I almost fear to ask,
  So void were they of grace:
Are they, then slow to learn the task,
  Now laggards in life's race?
Fond eyes I know have ceased to weep
O'er some, so long has been their sleep;
And others chide the hours that creep
  With tardy, cruel pace.

Our youthful loves were pure and true,
  Our linking firm and fast.
Have some who even then did woo
  Won their desire at last?

Do any life's full dowry miss,
And scorn the tie, the home, the kiss,
To linger on in lonely bliss,
  Till wooing-time be past?

How oft in trouble, care, or pain,
  Hath memory lent me cheer,
By calling up the forms again
  Imperishably dear!
Oblivious Time shall never cheat
My heart of joy so pure and sweet.
The Past is with me till we meet:
  O may the hour be near!

TO A FLOCK OF SNOW BUNTINGS.

WILD pilgrims from the cheerless North,
I thank the gale that hurled you forth
Wave-wearied on our shore;
Yon skylarks, too, that so befriend
Your lonely lot, and deign to blend
With birds that never soar!
The glee and movement charm my eyes
And tempt me to soliloquize.

O herald not, like Goth or Hun,
A host the empire to outrun,
While they are in the clouds!
For Greece upsoaring soon was lost,

And Rome fell dreaming, to her cost,
While stragglers beckoned crowds.
Be that far from you! skylarks wrong
The sunny day who stint their song.

They woo you, as we welcome those
That brave the cold of Arctic snows
The far North Pole to gain;
Or maybe, as musicians love
The throng who, while they sing above,
Drink in the melting strain:
And, haply, as the dull delight
In beauty, and adore the bright.

Nature, who gives to one the Muse,
And to another lovely hues,
Hath mantled you in grace:
Nor know I many a fairer thing
Than your manœuvres on the wing;
And it would shame our race
If spy ensnared, or fowler shot
Such charmers of our wintry lot.

I feign you wild Siberian guests
Whom hospitable Britain rests
With music, mirth, and fare—
Who brighten our grey silent time
With lore and legend from the clime
That vaunts the snowy bear;
Or Danes, whose gracious mien and spell
Hath made warm England love them well.

O! when, the winter o'er, we part,
Still linger in my summer heart,
To haunt its fields and flowers:
And gambol while the choir uprise
In tuneful circle to the skies,
And breed amid the bowers:
For guests we truly love remain
Tho' sense appear to make us twain.

TO A WILD PEAR TREE.

THOU silent dreamer by the gate
Of a bright orchard plot,
Where smile thy nobler kin, stern Fate
Hath barred thee from their lot!
So Eve, for many a wistful hour,
With dreary look and fruitage sour,
Might haply gaze on Eden's bower
From an accursed spot.

Or better still, yon trees shall stand
For saints in Paradise;
Whom thou, deformed by evil's brand,
Dost view with hopeless eyes;
Their bloom so stainless, thine impure,
Their fruit superb, thine immature;
Thy livelong tale a forfeiture
Of nobler state and guise.

Nor doth thy fate alone invite
My look of sympathy:
Truth's rigour, and the tender light
Of beauty hallow thee:
And I am gnarled and ageing fast;
And I from Eden am outcast;
And I, too, hunger that, at last,
I may transplanted be.

Fast ageing—and the mistletoe,
White-berried, fresh, and green,
That wreathes thee, lends a happy glow,
A blithe and merry mien;
As Memory keeps my childhood's bliss,
Youth's innocence, the stolen kiss,
The wintry dance, nor lets me miss
One face from the bright scene!

An Eden outcast—ah! too true;
For sin my birthright stole;
The glory to my being due,
Hath left me, body and soul:
And part of me is dead, like those
Dry branches whereon nothing grows—
No tender green, or blushing snows,
Or fruit of golden hue.

Away, vain tears! for no remorse
Can make the withered live.
The all remaining keep from loss—
The all so fugitive!

Brave heart! more energy, more toil;
And look! yon dry bough doth not spoil
The lovely bloom; but, like a foil,
A heightened charm doth give.

Thou hast no Paradise in store
Poor plant, for all thy dream!
But I, more wise than heretofore,
My birthright may redeem:
And flowers immaculate, and fruit
Whose wealth and flavour none dispute,
May flourish, worthy of a root
Fed by a living Stream.

TO A FLOCK OF KNOTS.

THE many kindle at the view
(The blend of outline, texture, hue),
And leave in rapture; but the few
Remain to note each trait.
This morn, of all that linger long
O'er golden sand and billows' song,
How many mark the feathered throng
That feed and fight and play?

My eye is on your busy joys:
But why the turmoil, strife, and noise?
Am I the villain that decoys,
The fowler fain to kill?

Ah! who that saw you pitch, and droop
Your curve of lovely wing, to troop
Along the beach, a graceful group,
  Could be a murderer still?

Ye range the line of flowing tide,
As in the day of Danish pride,
Whose vanity a king would chide:
  In view of sea and sky
The billows breaking on that coast
Updrove you near the fawning host
Who, chiming in an empty boast,
  Would Herod him on high.

Was it a wild October day,
When shanks of green and wings of grey
Played hide and seek mid the white spray,
  That he their vaunt would quell?
Or was it on a vernal beach,
When happy flocks swept out of reach,
All flaming-hued—a lover each,
  While some stood sentinel?

O king, who vainly bad'st the wave
Retire that dared thy throne to lave,
The God whom thou extolledst gave
  Their charms for human lore!
Thou and thy courtiers who ensnared
And slew His monitors had shared
Wisdom Divine, if ye had spared,
  Watched, aye and copied more.

Fair birds, 't would make an angel weep
To note how here as then men keep
The sense to value you asleep,
  The eye to mark you sealed!
One honour reached you thro' their shame—
The royal gourmand stamped his fame
On you: ye bear the vaunted name
  To which those courtiers kneeled!

TO A NUTHATCH.

ARBOREAL pilgrim! many a time
Have I stood sentry near a lime,
Or oak, or elm, to watch thee climb
    And note thy ways.
Now let me honour one in rhyme
    That met my gaze.

'Tis not that thy brisk form doth lend
Life to the tree—that thou dost spend
A fiery spirit—or the blend
    Of thy soft hues:
Nor yet the way thou dost ascend
    That wakes my muse:

Nor the affection for thy bride
Which bids thee clamber by her side,
Whene'er she quits the snowy pride
  Of your hid home,

No, nor the care wherewith ye guide
Your brood that roam.

All clamberers herein consent:
But thou art sole in downward bent;
The summit of accomplishment
Finds thee untired;
And oft the ease of thy descent
Have I admired.

I sing it now, for while I see
Full many climb the social tree,
And struggle up with dignity;
Few lose renown,
Or meet the lapse from high degree
Without a frown.

Our spirit's flame, our manhood's might,
Are leagued to help us up the height;
But let reversal come ere quite
We gain the top,
And soul and body shun the fight
To break the drop.

And life—how loftily we scale
The mount while youth and health prevail!
But ah! brave mentor! when they fail
Be mine the grace,
The cheer wherewith thine upward trail
Thou dost retrace!

ON A MAY-TREE IN FULL BLOOM.

O GRACE of Earth, O balm of Air!
So fragrant, so divinely fair,
What scent is worthy to compare
With this, what lovely scene?
A snow-fall, born of the blue skies?
A whiff from flowers of Paradise?
From whiter foam did Venus rise
To reign as Beauty's queen?

May's glory from November's tomb!
Bright wings and music 'mid the bloom
Enfolded long in wintry gloom!
Fair ministry of joy!
Thy summer beauty wakes the thought
That I thro' darkness may be brought
To grace and purity, and wrought
For some divine employ.

But lighter fancies hold me now—
Sin lurks beneath the purest brow,
As thorns beset each whitened bough
Within thy spotless whole.
Full many a one an angel seems,
Round whom bright-wingéd beauty teems;
When near approach would melt all dreams
And lift the aureole.

And many another wears as gay
A guise, as perfect an array:
A queen of joy she looks—but stay!
The veil is backward blown—
Behold the thorny life, whose mask
'Mid glow and music seemed to bask!
Ay, ponder o'er its pangs, nor ask
For other than thine own!

And snow doth mantle many a haunt
Of devils, dreary, keen, and gaunt:
Scarce any sharpness but doth vaunt
A fragrant, calm outside.—
Dark doubt below, belief above,
Virtue that Time doth soon disprove,
Hate masquerading as true love,
Shy meekness cloking pride.

And once I met a maid like thee
Thou gentle, white, deceitful tree!
Round whom coquetted airily
A myriad fain to kiss.
I took her hand, and thought her heart
Was mine, but lo! a sudden dart
Unfooled me, for I keep the smart
From that far day to this.

CUCKOO-CALLS.

NO poet ever can have heard
Thy sylvan clamour, fairy bird!
With pulse unquickened, brain unstirred,
And spirit uninspired.
So oft thine advent hath been sung,
And on thy note the changes rung,
I had been mute, but can his tongue
Be still, whose heart is fired?

And none who note, as I do now,
Thy cadence from a leafy bough,
Hath told a giddy world that thou
Art come to turn it wise—
To bid it ponder ere the choice
Of many a gay defiant voice,
That makes the thrilling sense rejoice,
Yet pilots on to sighs.

O schemer, who wilt soon destroy
The quietude and household joy
Of startled ones, whom thy decoy
Hath lured from happy nests!
Thou mindest me of many a field
Where linger dupes whose doom is sealed,
Since heart and will they blindly yield
To one whose call arrests.

'Mid the sweet meadow of life's spring
Fair Pleasure trails a lovely wing,
And from some vantage-peak doth sing
The oft-repeated strain.
Those syren tones of blithe misrule,
How strange their magic to befool
The soaring soul, while Wisdom's school
Doth discipline in vain!

With Age reminding that the tune
Doth falter, like thy call in June,
And that, with Autumn, sure and soon,
The music will have fled;
With echoes of an empty Past,
Delight unfledged, and hope outcast
To cradle some intruder vast
That clamoured to be fed!

'Mid fields of sober, fruitful toil
The demagogue doth chant of spoil
And piracy, nor fears recoil
Of aught upon himself:
Upstarting workers quickly throng
To hear the annual twofold song
Of byegone harm and present wrong,
That merit force and pelf.

Enchanting scenes before them float,
An Eden near, a Heaven remote,
Like all imagine when thy note
Re-echoes thro' the wood—

While Poverty, that giant guest,
Doth oust all comfort from the nest,
And bring to an unpitying test
The promise of near good.

'Mid fields of flowering culture oft
Hath shouted one who bravely scoffed
At all below, as from aloft
He feigned some gospel new—
"The Past is Winter dead and dark,
And chilly Spring's advance, but hark!
This bright evangel stamps the mark
Of Summer on the view:

"Lo! Thought's dull pastures, how they rise
In sudden bloom toward the skies!"
So vaunteth he—but criticise
His song, and what appears?
'Tis but the roguish note of old;
The Present is the Past retold;
Leaf, flower, and fruitage will unfold,
As ever, thro' the years.

They call, they promise, they depart,
To leave each dupe a bleeding heart;
And yet, like thee, all play a part
In the world-mystery—
The fields would forfeit half their grace,
Shorn of the instincts of thy race,
Profaning to its dire disgrace
The vernal history!

TO A BLUEBELL.[1]

LOOK up, thou lovely sylvan flower!
Why should a lily hang its head
That hath no rival in the bower,
And hardly in the bed?
A purple robe hath marked thy birth
For dignity, and royal mirth;
Let sunbeams kiss each lifted cup,
And breezes toy with it—look up!

What girl her ringlets ever shook
With coyer wilfulness than this?
Thou shunnest both the flaming look
And the encircling kiss.
A magic in the balmy breeze
Hath set thee trembling, ill at ease;
Nor hath a constellation bright
A charm to win thy gaze at night.

[1] According to the ancient myth Hyacinthus was greatly beloved both by Apollo and Zephyrus; and the latter, whose affection was not returned, grew jealous of the former, who was intrusted with the education of Hyacinthus. As Apollo was playing quoits one day with his pupil, Zephyrus blew a quoit thrown by Apollo upon the head of Hyacinthus, and killed him, after which Apollo changed his blood into a flower which bore his name, and placed his body among the constellations.

Ah! now I have it—thou dost rise
From his immortal blood, who while
His body gleameth in the skies
Doth thro' thy beauty smile.
Apollo weaveth still a charm;
Doth Zephyrus still compass harm,
That Hyacinth in floral state
Remembereth a cruel fate?

Nay, tremble not! the zephyr's love,
Hath naught of envy in it now;
Apollo woos thee from above
Thro' many a screening bough;
The tender gale that round thee plays
Would toss thy bloom to front his rays:
The gentle air, the genial sun,
To keep thee fair are both at one.

What! wilt thou never look aloft?
Then 'tis a Hyacinthine star,
Methinks, that beams an influence soft
Upon thee from afar;
And seals thee for an earthly lot,
A quiet life in this green spot—
To bloom in beauty mid the shade,
And squander perfume thro' the glade.

JOY IN MEMORY.

WILL the hours of glory,
That shone thro' the tears of Time,
Tell a joyous story
When life hath foregone its prime?
Will the vanished pleasure
One dream of delight restore?
Can we spend our treasure,
Yet keep it for evermore?

Ah! the rainbow's splendour
Doth fade in a tearful sky;
Tho' divinely tender,
The hues of the evening die:
If a faint reflection
Doth bloom the sad grey awhile,
Like a spent affection
It melts in a joyless smile.

Yet the bow's bright magic
Kind memory guardeth well;
And naught fair or tragic
Effaceth the evening spell:
So the heart's young gladness
Still liveth to glow again
With a lovely sadness,
A glory no cloud can stain.

And a hand doth beckon
Me back from the misty tears
To an hour that I reckon
The best in the byegone years.
Point on, gentle finger,
To joy that then mocked despair!
If thy magic linger
Delight may now conquer care.

TO A FAMILY OF SWIFTS.

HOPEFUL in movement, yet hopeless in hue,
Which do ye image, vociferous crew?
Demons of darkness, or seraphs of light,
Prophets of wrong, or exponents of right?
Wildly careering, and wheeling about,
Ever till now have ye left me in doubt—
Doubt that your rapture to-day doth dispel,
Stamping you children of heaven and not hell.

Manner, and method, and tone, and employ,
Chime of ecstatic, unchangeable joy.
Light is the parent of joy; the abyss
Yieldeth no pleasure, no glory like this.
Right is the mother of freedom; a chain
Bindeth wrong's brood to abasement and pain.
Angels ye are, and a message for Earth
Gleams thro' your darkness, and sounds in your mirth.

Is not your colour the hue that is worn
By every preacher of bliss to the lorn?
Gloomy they look to the children of sense;
Dark is their Creed, and its Sign an offence:
Yet but the envelope borrows from dusk,
Fair is the kernel tho' dull be the husk;
All true delight outward splendour doth lack,
Fitly, methinks, are they mantled in black.

Fitly as sable is worn for the dead,
Who to a glory unvisioned have fled;
Fitly as evening doth shrine the star-ray;
Fitly as night is the womb of the day;
Fitly as song bubbles up from the heart
Steeped in the gloom of dejection or smart;
Fitly as ye in the garb of despair
Shriek the delight that is rending the air.

Who could be dull with so blithe a refrain?
Gladness alone in my heart can remain.
O 'tis the sun that thick vapour enshrouds
Piercing the mists and dispelling the clouds!
Ye are the blackness that broods o'er the sea
Bursting to flood lovely moonlight on me.
Dark as the thunder-cloud ere the deep boom,
Shrill as the whirlwind, ye flash on my gloom.

Was it for nothing, black birds, that ye rose
Out of pure egg-shells that rival the snows,
And that to others as white as your own,
Life of your life, ye will shortly have flown?
Was it to hint that keen vision may find
Good out of evil, before and behind,

Darkness the child and the parent of light,
Joy masquerading in mantle of night?

Speed like the ravens of old, that did bring
Food to the Prophet who pined by the spring!
Bear to my Cherith a banquet divine—
To my lone heart be your triumph a sign!
Let the dark thoughts that now throng it appear
Radiant with hope, while ye circle and veer!
Sadness, begone! dull dejection, adieu!
Follow and fade with them into the blue!

THE ROSE TREE'S DISCOURSE.

QUEEN of the garden fair!
  Why should thy breath
Swoon on the perfumed air
  Into dumb death?
Fain would I wrest thy tale
From the light wandering gale,
And, ere it faint or fail,
  Hear what it saith.

Flowers of thine every year
  Thro' joy and gloom
Deck what we hold so dear—
  Home, altar, tomb.
Oh, thou hast much to say:
Much both of grave and gay,

In thy sweet, silent way,
Eloquent bloom!

Much thro' thy glowing spoil
Culled for each tide;
Fresh mid our dust and moil,
Calm mid our pride—
Much thro' thy prophecies,
Waking faint memories
That brim the heart and eyes—
Much, much beside.

Doth not a whisper breathe
Of early dreams—
Of a pink-budded wreath
Kissed by sunbeams,
Of a wild jubilee
Thro' a growth fair and free,
Round which Creation's glee
Tunefully streams?

Doth not a voice recount
Riper employ?
Full-blown delight, the fount
Of honeyed joy;
First-love's delirious spell,
Wooing, and marriage-bell,
Rapture no heart can tell,
No wrong destroy.

Doth not an accent warn
That joy will blow
'Mid many a cruel thorn
Lurking below—

That, like thy beauty, bliss
Faints at too rude a kiss?
For, closely clasped, we miss
  Perfume and glow.

Doth not a whisper hint
  At a far hour
When ne'er a sunny glint
  Gleams on the bower.
When grace and joy are past?
For, 'mid the icy blast,
Down the leaves flutter fast
  From the spent flower.

Doth not a tone remind
  That perfume shed
May linger long behind
  Loveliness dead?
Oft a memorial trace
Haunteth the empty place
Where many a charm and grace
  Flourished and fled.

TO A FLOCK OF OYSTER CATCHERS.

O THERE are cries that voice the heart of May,
And forms that shape the spirit of the bay,
And scenes whose magic memory bears away
  To recreate at will!

Such was your note when first ye met my sight;
The chequered beauty of your wings in flight,
The breezy freshness, and the golden light;
The blue serenely still.

Gay sea-pies, white as snow, and black as ink;
Like sunset, orange; and like dawning, pink!
Your colours catch the eye that we may link
Your work and play to man's—
That your activity our sloth may chide,
Your craft and skill our sluggish wit may guide,
Your joyful unity condemn our pride,
Who sport in cliques and clans.

Scold us more shrilly till your toil we match;
Our secrets from their envelope we snatch,
Our wealth from rocky frontiers we detach
With your agility!
Till from oppression and disdain we keep;
And skimming ever and anon the deep
Of glittering pleasure, in blithe commune sweep
Back to our haunt with glee.

OPTIMIST *v.* PESSIMIST.

ARE evil, woe, and pain
But morning-mists that melt into the blue,
Or tearful clouds that gather for more rain
And darkness ever new?

I lately strove for long
With one who held that some should follow Right,
And find eternal Day—some follow Wrong,
And know eternal Night.

The Holy Book, he said,
Revealed immortal Life, unending Death:
By Words inspired the spirit should be led,
Not by mere human breath.

He urged that they whose will
Was chained to evil, scorning to be free,
While here would deeper sink, and deeper still
To all Eternity.

He pointed me to Light,
And made me mark the shadow that it cast;
To prove that, for the Future to be bright,
Gloom too must ever last.

He bade me view the Poles,
So far removed, and evermore apart;
The shores, he urged, between the sea that rolls,
Divide as heart from heart.

Creation's texture shews
Evil the warp, of Good the lovely woof.
Nought can a vital principle foreclose;
That was his final proof.

It failed to reach me—why?
There was a something in me that rebelled:
A doubt no argument could satisfy,
A hope no proof dispelled.

Methought, "I cannot bring
Strong evidence all this to countervail;
Yet let me look; for scarce a questioned thing
But tells a two-fold tale."

Not that I failed of heed
To Words Divine; but much seems left obscure;
And that hope glistened thro' the Christian Creed
I could not but feel sure.

That most in a dark age
Denied it, was far less to me than this,
That loftier souls had gleaned from every page
All should at length find bliss.

Tho' Revelation leave
Evil's dark votaries in hopeless doom,
God's works belie their doctrine who believe
Dawn cannot streak their gloom.

When midnight breeds no day,
Storm clouds no rainbow, and rough waves no calm;
When sorrow comes no healing can allay,
And pain untouched by balm:

When mortals shed no tear
O'er woe, e'en well deserved, in Wrong's foul den:
Then will I cast my hope, and hug my fear—
Never, my God, till then!

What if all final things
Be fraught with meaning open to the wise?
Not one when catechized but comfort brings
To wistful, peering eyes.

I went to Nature first,
Who over death, and wrong, and suffering beamed;
As if to show all now was at the worst,
Nor all quite what it seemed.

I marked the certain Sleep
That ends a day by evil overborne:
Her bondsmen writhe, her dreamers fret and weep,
Yet hail a hopeful morn—

I sought the shrine of Death;
Yet tho' he told me nought of after-life,
I saw all marbled from the final breath
In calm devoid of strife.

I bade sad Memory
Unveil the changeless Past, both fair and foul;
And lo! soft sweetness, like a tender sky
To charm vext Ocean's scowl.

And Music at my call
Blent every discord in one harmony,
And bade me read in echo's lingering fall
A lovely prophecy.

The Year's completed round
Is robed in snow, as at her course begun;
May not our race be white at either bound,
Lost purity re-won?

If the Poles figure forth
A gulf eternal, can there be no bridge?
Is not the south as snowy as the north,
Spotless at either ridge?

And then my heart I asked
If ever its depraved imagining
Could feign Love, Truth, and Righteousness, untasked,
To end all suffering.—

Could feign strong Fatherhood,
Foreknowing all, who yet could life bestow
On any, that might barter destined good
For hopeless sin and woe—

Could feign Creative Power,
Who left unmade or fashioned, at His Will;
Yet made aught sentient, with an endless dower
Of torment to fulfil.

It throbbed a thousand times,
"Nay, never!" and to Moral Sense I went
Whose negative, since with all else it chimes,
Be my last argument!

HEART UNION.

BEND o'er me, like the sky above
The ocean, in perpetual love!
So tutor me that none may err
Who seek in me thy character:
That every motion of thy heart
May have in mine its counterpart,
Or somewhat at the least to shew
That to thy charm I ebb and flow.

Thy stainless blue and golden light
Shall find me calm, and clear, and bright;
With answering shadows when I feel
That glooms upon thy glory steal.
A gathering gale, a stormy cloud
Of thine shall make me moan aloud.
Thy tears, down raining, from my deep
Heart-breakers foam, and fall, and weep.

Whatever Thought and Fancy trace
On thee are in my tell-tale face;
Thine inspiration is a wind
To ripple my responsive mind;
The hopes that in thy bosom rest
Reflect their splendour in my breast;
And from thy lofty being's strife
Is born whatever stains my life.

And tenderly we intertwine,
As fades the sky-and-ocean line.
The two are blent in matin mist
Like we are joined who early kissed.
As both appear in darkness one,
None severs us in trouble—none;
And shadows clearing, all shall see
That thou art very heaven to me.

THE BIRTH OF PHILANTHROPY.

'TIS like far music from an angel band,
The tones of Love
That first enchant us in the fairy land
Thro' which we move.
Poised like the golden flies o'er perfumed flowers,
Or basking in the sunbeams 'mid bright bowers,
We start to hear them thro' the gentle hours
Steal from Above.

While the dim early consciousness doth last,
The tune is all:
But with the happy dream of childhood past,
The notes will fall
On critic ears that would resolve their sum;
And hearts that, by the harmony o'ercome,
Would know from whom and whence each tone doth come
Of their sweet thrall.

The nearer music, the advancing truth,
O how they fill
The wistful being of prophetic youth!
The senses thrill,
The spirit quickens with a strange delight,
Ere Love's fair minstrelsy appears in sight.
They come—and we, before the vision bright,
Adult, stand still.

For opening Manhood into bloom will burst
When it doth know
That the far sounds that seemed all heavenly first,
From mortals flow,
Chiming of Love, yet hidden from the ken,
Till the ripe heart be ready for them, when
They march in view with various pipe—true men
In radiant show.

Enraptured by the melody, we long
To play a part;
The fount of music from that tuneful throng
Is but the heart;
Our private pipe would swell the harmony;
Let Love enlist us in that company!
And so we joy in others' revelry
Till all depart.

SOUL-CUSHIONS.

O MIND that questions all, repose
On what is shewn
By anything whereof one knows
What can be known!
The eye but resteth on the robe
That mantleth a mysterious globe:
Behind it none will ever probe,
Till Time be flown.

O fevered heart that will not rest
In mortal love,
Recline on some dear human breast,
And look above!
In its fond loyalty discern
Eternal constancy, and learn
That One doth live Who cannot turn
And will not move.

O aching conscience, pillow thee
On some kind word
That saith man's grace doth hold thee free
From guilt incurred!
And think—if human pardon shine
Thus brightly, how much more Divine
May not sweet Heaven to me incline,
Who so have erred?

UNSATED SOULS.

DOWERED with an environment
Of the brightest God can give,
Why the nameless discontent
With the all mid which ye live?
Heaven so golden, Earth so fair,
Life so hopeful, love so sweet,
How is it that everywhere
Your strange wistfulness we meet?

Preachers know the piercing gaze
That will brook no sophistries:
Lovers chide with sad amaze
Hungry and unhappy eyes.
All the more ye press and strain,
Nigh the heaven of earthly bliss.
Would ye the horizon gain,
And o'erleap it—why is this?

Ask the bird and fly that spoil
Native shells in peeping out,
Snowdrops while they rend the soil,
Rosebuds reddening as they sprout:
Questioned, they will tell the cause—
Latent longing, quick desire
Bid all being mock the laws
Of Earth's thrall, and skyward spire.

Sunny beams with golden glint
Flashing through the leaden cloud,
Then retiring, sadly hint
That ye cannot pierce your shroud;
Curtained by the veil of sense,
Tantalized by nobler things,
Baffled, yet unconquered: hence
All the sighs, the questionings.

Argus-eyed, like heaven above
Is the dusky mortal scene.
Worlds of prisoned life and love
Look so pure, but ah! so keen—

Orbs encircle me like those
Twinkling thro' the chilly night;
Fixed, yet alien from repose;
Mid the darkness strangely bright.

Yet as some enchanting globe
Beams a welcome, many a time
Almost tempting me to probe
Deep behind its silvery clime;
So mid numbers oft I chance
On a look that half betrays
All beneath it, a shy glance
That invites my curious gaze.

Limpid eyes, false sentinel
Of your fortress, and true guide
To the spy who fain would tell
What the shrinking soul doth hide.
Diving down your deep I muse,
Is your midnight like the spheres?
Are ye wet with heavenly dews,
Or with earth's wild passion-tears?

Or like stars thro' winter frost
Are ye always dry and bright,
Shining on, whate'er the cost,
Thro' the dark and lonely night?
Tearful cease to vainly weep!
Fearless still with patience bear!
Earth's sad vigil all must keep
Who Heaven's festival would share.

Do ye tell of Truth unfound,
Joy untasted, Love unwon,
Strife by victory uncrowned,
Deeds (how vainly!) wished undone?
Take this comfort! all ye ask
Nears you thro' the stress and pain;
While, but for the muffling mask
Ye were short of half your gain.

SILENT WOOING.

SHE asked me in the garden
What flower I liked the best;
And thro' my choice I tried to voice
The love that fired my breast.
The blossom's beauty would I name
Whereof she most partook;
I knew she understood my aim
From her shy, laughing look.

The spirit of the violet
Was in her heart and eyes;
And on her face a lily-grace,
A rose's warm surprise;
The snowdrop imaged one all pure;
The crocus, one all bright.
The pansy looked a miniature
Of a fair dreamy sprite.

No blossom could I single,
So eloquent was each;
When half in fun, she gathered one
Of all within our reach.
The posy pictured her full worth,
Her fairy self, and she,
In yielding it with bashful mirth
Gave the best flower to me.

TO A BUTTERCUP.

STILL looking up with patient gaze,
Memento of the golden days
When thou and I were young!
Unfolding from a nether birth,
With power to win a brighter worth
By rising from ignoble earth
From whence we both had sprung.

Each debtor to a Sun above,
Whose dazzling rays were leagued in love
With wind and dew and rain,
To fire us into glorious growth,
If only we were nothing loath
And waved away contemning sloth,
Earth's welcome to remain.

'Twas thine, wise flower, to look aloft
Thro' gale and moisture, rude and soft,

To let them lift thee up,
And fold thee in thy Sun's embrace;
And lo! his form and beams and grace
Are figured in the golden face
Of a mere buttercup.

'Twas mine to scorn the rivalry
Of love, that to a better Sky
Was fain to lift my soul.
Downbent, the drop, the breath, the storm,
Were impotent to mould her form;
A brighter Sun could not conform,
Or lend an aureole.

O had I but allowed the kiss,
The lingering look, I too ere this
Had imaged that pure Sun.
Some Angel, glowing thro' His Power,
Had spied from an eternal Bower,
(As I behold thee, lovely flower!)
That He and I were one.

Yet tutored by yon vision fair
I scorn to droop into despair.
Thou hiddest me, brave bloom,
Contemn my lot and covet thine;
And turning to the Light Divine
At length, in His reflection, shine
The brighter for past gloom!

SUPPRESSED EMOTION.

A SHALLOW grief in tears we tell:
A deep one, hardly comes to light.
For every fountain, many a well
Forbears to bubble into sight.

Light ills may breathe a tender wail;
Our truest wrong begets no sigh:
This imaged in the zephyr-gale,
That in a torrid, tranquil sky.

Yet not for ever can the heart
Bear bitterness thus inly pent;
Not always will the tears that start
Fall back, or grief refuse a vent.

Oft will a threatened outburst loom
Like thunder o'er a quiet day;
To gather, in meridian gloom,
Yet vanish all unspent away.

But as a spell of burning days
Is freshened by nocturnal dew,
So we, by lonely, hidden ways,
Our spirits lighten and renew.

To ease the heart, which else would break,
The veiling night is all thine own;
That critic eye and ear awake
May mark no tear, nor hear one moan.

LINES WRITTEN AT WESTWARD HO! FOR THE ALBUMS OF THREE SISTERS.

STRANGE pebble on the ridge of earth,
By the dark ocean's power upcast,
Ask not the secret of thy birth,
Nor study to unveil thy past!
This of thy being is one cause—
That firm as flint thy soul may stand
Mid millions, faithful to the laws
Immutable on sea and land.

The charm of spring is in thy face:
Bloom on in summer loveliness!
Tho' autumn wind must mar thy grace
And wintry snow upon thee press.
Let fragrance linger round this spot,
And wander on, to perfume earth,
That men may mark the garden plot
Which gave so sweet a floweret birth.

Bright seaweed tossed out on the sand
Of Time from the Eternal Main,
'Tis thine to linger on the strand
Awhile, and be swept back again!
Tho' none may gather thee and press
Thy form between memorial leaves,
Of thine immortal loveliness
No gulfing tide our heart bereaves.

CLEVEDON.

SEEK ye the glow that never fades,
The beauty that decayeth not?
Behold them here! no change invades
  Thy charm, thou lovely spot!
Fair straggler on the Channel-side,
The current of my mortal tide
In flow or ebb doth ever seem
Begilt by that perennial gleam!

In flow: for many an hour of health
Hath grown more joyous in thy light;
Frame, mind, and heart have won new wealth
  From plain, and dale, and height.
Enchanted garden! calm and joy
Have met me here as man and boy:
The glancing Muses round me play
When thro' thy labyrinth I stray.

In ebb: for was it not disease
That winged me to thee as a child?
And pain hath curtsied oft to ease
  When by thy spell beguiled.
With thy nepenthe grief and gloom
In hot pursuit have found no room:
And thy delight makes Heaven draw near
When common Earth doth look too drear.

In flow and ebb: for truest life
Is lived apart from Space and Time:
In the lone spirit's calm and strife
  Doth being grow sublime:
And Memory hath ever power
To paint thee as befits the hour:
So deeply is thy charm impressed,
So truly, in my loyal breast.

Eden of lovers, painters, bards;
Elysium for the sick and sad!
I marvel any disregards
  What makes my life so glad—
Bower, terrace, grove, and sunset hue,
And each incomparable view.
Angels of grace, mar all device
That would dismantle Paradise!

THE LINNET'S HAUNT.

A RING of golden gorse beguiled
My feet from a rough mountain-way—
And from it rose a bird that smiled
And carolled on a gleaming spray.

O the sweet music of the song!
O the bright glory of the bloom!
My heart was lonely, but a throng
Of fancies glittered thro' the gloom.

Sky, sea, and land, in order lent
A field for wild imaginings;
So well the sound and vision blent
With heavenly and earthly things.

The yellow circle seemed the sun
Aflame the western wave to kiss;
While from his rim, ere day was done,
An angel sang of love and bliss,

Then I beheld 'mid summer seas
A golden island of the blest,
Whence fairy music on the breeze
Charmed weary mariners to rest.

That ring of flowering thorn was next
This twofold home of ease and pain;
The flower-throned minstrel he who vexed
By nether sharpness joy doth gain.

And then 'twas gold-paved heaven at last
Won by a winged chanter bright
Who, earth's keen maze of trouble past,
On his pure heritage doth light.

Refreshed, from the fair dream I rose:
I was the warbler, and the gold
My chequered lot till life shall close;
Then—bliss, by Fancy all untold.

POST MORTEM.

If after the change that unfetters the soul
I were free to return for a day of the Time
I now deem of such little account, on parole,
To be back before Midnight should tell out her chime.

Enlightened of Paradise, how would I spend
The moments, in view of each broken earth-link,
With power to impress upon all, foe or friend,
My being and will? Let me think, let me think!

Would I seek to revive the old care and delight,
Living over again the gay smile and sad tear?
What use? would the tender Time-chain re-unite?
Who, what—could now vary one dear vanished year?

Behind would I leave the immutable Past,
And try to transfigure the wrong that must stop;
Or from the decay of the fruit that it cast,
Engender, like Nature, a new happy crop.

I would hold in contempt what on Earth is our boast;
I would vaunt the true value of what we despise:
And if at my will men could see me, the ghost
Of what they once knew should oft steal on their eyes.

What for? that, like Hamlet, survivors may learn
To avenge me of wrong in the body? Not so.
Should men thro' my spectre, like Banquo's, discern
The one who in life had most injured me? No.

Full fraught with delight from the shadowless Shore,
My spirit would scatter rare gifts while it sped ;
Like a lovely spring gale sweeping on with a store
Of beauty and life for the dark and the dead.

As a bright girl who visits a city of woe,
Bringing sweet country-freshness to squalor and need,
Its light would bequeath an ineffable glow;
An aroma of grace from its calm would proceed.

High hope and resolve would be brought to the birth,
In the heart of calm sleepers o'er whom it might pause;
As a warm spell of sunshine may leave wintry earth
Quick with impulse whereof one bright hour is the cause.

Would it in the dark graveyard or avenue lurk
To wantonly frighten the foolish and vain?
To startle the early-afoot for their work,
Would it steal on their notice in some twilit lane?

Ah! no ; a white sign-post at Life's parting ways,
It might linger in metaphor, hardly in fact ;
To waken men's feelings, not creep on their gaze,
Save where thus alone it could stay a vile act.

At morn it should quicken the priest to uphold
The Truth, and the lawyer the Right to maintain ;
Check the banker and broker from worshipping gold,
And the shopman from bartering honour for gain.

And would-be deceivers should pause thro' its charm,
And tears in some penitent eyes should upwell ;
The felon in gaol should repent of his harm,
And Heaven should welcome the truant from hell.

At noon, in the garden, or mid the gay parks,
The lounger should thrill and the libertine quake ;
Mute spirits upsoaring should carol like larks,
And prayer from the deep of dumb hearts should out-
break.

And in the dark hospital patients might think,
Thro' its magic, of glory, forgetting their woe ;
As when a sweet sunbeam doth steal thro' the chink
Of a dungeon, and brighten a heart with its glow.

And in the soft gloaming when lovers entwine,
It should hallow the cornfield, the stile and the grove,
And the nightingale's music should sound more divine
Thro' its charm, as true hearts grew diviner in love.

If in the grey churchyard fresh tears should bedew
The wreath that a lonely one lays on a tomb ;
A vision unearthly should flash on her view,
And flowers of new hope in her spirit should bloom.

It should linger at night by a dear dreamer's bed,
Who, wrapped in soft slumber, might feel it was near ;
And waking should gaze on the form of the dead,
To win some sweet token of love, without fear.

One day of the thousand unvalued in life—
O the harvest of glory from that to be gleaned!
The comfort and calm to be shed on its strife ;
The hearts from its evil and wrong to be weaned!

Twice twelve of the hours within which can be done
Such a marvel of mercy, and goodness, and love.
Too brief—yet, believe me, much wealth should be won
For my meed of rejoicing in Eden above!

Back gazing from Paradise many a thorn
In the exile of earth would look mantled in white :
On many a thistle, keen, angry and lorn,
Imperial purple should bloom in delight.

FORTUNE'S WOOING.

SHE courted me at first, and I
Felt nothing loath.
I kindled to her look and sigh,
And fought with sloth.
She seemed to conquer native pride,
So much she longed to be my bride.
A pauper I ? let her provide
The means for both !

We would not wed now, tho' she won
My constant gaze.
My outlook was as when the sun
Bursts thro' the haze.
I was the lady, she the knight
Parading ever in my sight ;
The ruff who to the reeve a bright
Love-garb displays.

But lo ! when she had bid me burn,
She grew quite chill.
With sigh and tear I sought to turn
Her wayward will.

She flouted me, and broke her vow,
But not my heart—O no! for now
She moves toward me, wondering how
I can be still.

I'll tell her! I have done with thee,
Thy calm and strife;
A pensioner I'll never be
On any wife!
I scorn and quit thee from this hour,
And live, whatever storm may lower,
By my true self and native power,
The single life!

CYNTHIA.

HER beauty rose upon my day,
A crescent moon three parts concealed;
I wondered what she would display
When all her being was revealed.
Too many a woman, well I knew,
Is fair enough to public view;
For all her loveliness is spent
In fashion's glittering firmament.

The shadows fell around me soon;
Weal turned to woe, pain conquered health:
Another quarter of that moon
Was then unveiled by gentle stealth—

Our social part is oft at strife
With that which touches busy life :
But she my trouble beamed upon,
And in whate'er she handled shone.

The twilight deepened, and behold
A third pure quarter was displayed !
A quiet tale serenely told
Emerged, to cheer me, from the shade—
Not she, but others, let me know
That home was silvered by her glow :
And thro' her presence, calm and bright,
Mine soon was bathed in lovely light.

And at my darkest, she allowed
The one remaining part to shine.
Reserve till then had kept the shroud
O'er that which made her wholly mine—
The love from which is born all grace
Of heart, and mind, and form and face.
Full moon it was when I could see
That she had given hers to me !

Fair is the Day ; when all above
The heart's deep want doth sing and bloom :
But fairer is the Night, if love
Uncurtain glory over gloom.
Full many in a golden hour
Have shown rare charm and worth and power :
But in my Midnight one pure soul
Was orbed into a perfect whole.

UNVALUED TOKENS.

THE fairy shows of love, we pass them by—
The tender trifles, the fond word and look,
Meet a cold spirit, an averted eye,
Which hardly noticed this, and that mistook.

We are the heedless ones who hurry past
The delicate hues of many-tinted eve;
Forgetful that the glory fading fast
No golden legacy of light will leave.

Then come the ashen sky, the lonely way,
The memory with no enchanted store,
The thought that all would not be cold and grey
Had we but looked, and loved, and lingered, more.

KITH AND KIN.

THEY come and go;
They haunt the changeful ocean of my life;
They share the tidal pulse, the ebb and flow,
The calm, the strife.

Each a fair barque
With full equipment for a troubled lot,
They win my shore, the few to disembark,
The many, not.

O bliss to feel
The thronging joys that hurry out from these!
Ah me! that those but turn a glancing keel
To woo the breeze.

And yet they shape
A course, I doubt not, to some end Divine.
Their charter is to many a spirit-cape,
More lone than mine.

They come—but whence?
From that horizon dim where vision fails;
From the dark deep o'er my sea-line of sense
Each calmly sails.

They go—but where?
Back to the mystery each, the voyage done;
They melt into the sky, the purple air,
The golden sun.

But others seem
To fade from view in mist and hurricane.
I'd give my all to know it but my dream
Who see not plain.

Far stormy skies
So oft delude, for near there is no gale.
Ah well! at least to all a haven lies
Beyond the veil.

LOVE'S DAY-DREAM.

As the glow of matin skies
Fires the dell and tints the lea ;
Sunshine from thine opening eyes
Floods my heart with golden glee.

Lightly shed, and quickly gone,
May thy tears like early showers,
Freshening what they fall upon,
Star it with unfolding flowers.

Let thy gaze at dreamy noon
Quench despair and quicken mirth ;
As the heavenly blue of June
Sheds meridian joy on earth.

Gladdened thus, be thine the calm
In the afternoon of all ;
Softening into vesper psalm,
Folded flowers and twilight fall.

But before thine ears retire
Underneath their lovely veil,
Dart a sunset-glance to fire
Every heart—hill, grove and dale.

Oft in tears doth Nature sleep,
As the dewy dark doth prove :
Hearts at nightfall cannot weep
If new dawn awake new love.

A SERMON IN STONE.

SINFUL and self-condemned I sought,
One golden day, a leafy wood;
When lo! a flower-girt statue brought
Strange cheer, as quietly it stood
In contrast with the feet which rove,
The hearts which throb, thro' that green grove.

The sculptor had portrayed a man
Competing in a race of old,
With limbs extended as he ran,
Defiant brow and figure bold.
Hope reached me thro' that strenuous form
To nerve my heart, and quell its storm.

It flashed upon me at a glance
That heavenly runners are like him—
One part of each is in advance,
And one outstrips another limb.
Contending for a crown, the soul
Must reckon progress on the whole.

While pressing on, to curb our pride
A sin we yield to keeps us back.
Then lowly love, our other side,
Comes to the front with what we lack;
That our whole being may attain
A step along the difficult plain.

Right hand and foot now to the fore
An ample energy impart—

Yet will they bring us forward more
Than left limbs nearer to the heart?
Both what we do and what we feel
Advance us—strength and loving zeal.

A darling sin we mourn awhile
That we are impotent to quench.
What if it vex, thro' Heavenly guile
To goad us on to one brave wrench?
How the athlete with a fierce swing
Of his lithe form doth onward spring!

I thank the man who marbled out
That cast; the owner too I thank,
That it doth face the heart devout
Who wanders to the leafy bank:
Him most I thank Who thro' the sight
Of it hath lent me cheer and might.—

Embowered contender, seasons speed,
And Death thy circling leaves shall chase;
And swifter coursers shall succeed
Him who now marks thy stony race;
Immovable, still run, and teach
The lore that lightened him, to each!

INSEPARABLE.

We cannot sever with a heart
The same as tho' we did not part:
Ere love could re-unite us, each
Might blame the other for the breach.

If we forgave, should we forget
The strife that left our eyes so wet?
Nor could we revel in a Past,
As now, undimmed from first to last.

The sun doth bid adieu, and burn
For others, and at dawn return
To win a welcome from the eyes
Who missed him from the twilit skies.
Warm summer doth the earth caress,
And robe her in a lovely dress,
To leave her lorn, yet reappear
With golden smile to dry each tear.

But none of them can thrill and throb
With rapture, none can sigh and sob.
Doth nature know the happy spell
That linked us while we loved so well?
The hidden hope, the nameless joy
That severance might well destroy:
The jealousy which will not brook
That stranger eyes should steal a look.

O there are sunless days, when all
Doth linger in gloom's dusky thrall,
And years when earth's enchanting face
Is robbed of half the summer grace!
And such a year, or such a day
Our parted life might well portray:
Far better, bonds that lightly fret
Than freedom weighted with regret!

INVOCATION OF IDEAL BEAUTY.

O THOU so long, so emptily pursued,
Shine out upon me! be the eyes now blest
That peer and fail, the weary heart renewed.
I woke into the world by thee caressed,
But looking, thou didst leave me, and the quest
Hath filled my life, of one then half unveiled
Who challenged me to chase her and arrest
The glory that before me ever sailed—
Me, wealthy if I won, a pauper if I failed.

Foil me no longer! life is on the wane,
And yet the prophecy is unfulfilled
That strenuous effort would not be in vain;
For that first glance which my young spirit thrilled
Was bright with promise that if I but willed
To banquet on thy face, so should it be—
Now let one longing look life's evening gild,
As when above a cold grey autumn-sea
Green gold and crimson blend in vesper harmony.

If I but willed it—why, no thirsty soul
Hath ever panted for pure water more;
No mariner round whom fierce billows roll
Could long so wildly for a gentle shore!
What lark hath half so truly pined to soar
That hymned the hidden sunlight from a cage?
I am a suitor aching to adore;
A learner mad for an enlightening sage;
An heir that brooks no bar from a bright heritage.

If I but willed it—like an April field
With seeds evolved by sunlight into flowers,
At thy full gaze my wintry heart would yield
Such bright fertility that in fair bowers
Virtue and Love in sport thro' golden hours
Should wed for ever, and a laughing brood
Of happy graces, or benignant powers,
Dry every tear, dispel the fretful mood,
Shed glory over toil, and charm my solitude.

Am I not true? what wouldst thou from me yet?
More care, and time, and tears, and labour spent?
Nay, I have paid in full my every debt.
Was fond Endymion ever more intent
On winning her who o'er his slumber bent?
Nor am I dreaming when I feel thee near,
But wide-awake; yet ah! so impotent
To break the spell that bids thee disappear,
And leave outwitted hands, and eyes that vainly peer.

How oft have I, preventing the pink dawn,
Stood sentinel (lest thro' a golden gate,
With bars of gloom too suddenly withdrawn
Thou with thy train sweep on, and I be late)
Yet even so, viewed but thy queenly state.
Thy look of light, for others, not for me,
Turned from my heart, and left it desolate,
As when warm beams, that gild a waking earth,
Retire and rob the hill of glow, the vale of mirth.

And oft at even when a sunset-light
Was flamed by thee, and my enraptured heart,
Hot as the fire that made the West so bright,
Hath leapt to hue and tint unwon by Art,

And I in ecstasy have caught one dart
Of sidelong glory, thy calm face hath turned
To bid the majesty and glow depart;
And naught in heaven or earth hath longer burned
But the poor kindled brain whose homage thou hast
spurned.

And oft the riot of the sea and wind
Hath lured me to some lonely precipice;
"They rave of her", methought, "and I shall find
The frenzy lead me to her promised bliss:
A rebel gale, while whispering of this,
Woke sleeping waves who rush to tell me first."
In the tossed rainbow-foam I felt thy kiss;
Thy breath in the wild air; each billow burst
In splendour, yet thy look eluded me accurst.

And glittering fields have wooed me with a smile,
And gleaming waters have enticed me near;
With nodding trees to share their lovely guile
And flowers with knowing look; and in my ear
Fast flitting birds have chanted "She is here",
And golden-belted bees—and I, too fond,
Have followed them, to mingle a sad tear
With matin dews, for field and silvery pond
Let me but skirt thy train of glory just beyond.

Where wilt thou tarry? in no ivied nook,
Sweet briary lane, green cuckoo-haunted place,
Geraniumed hedgerow, or moss-margined brook;
For down a many have I given thee chase;
Nor in the starlit canopy of space—

Too oft at sundown hast thou failed me there.
Ah! to the query, some bright human face,
When hopeless echo seemed to answer "Where?"
Hath ever and anon flashed forth divinely fair;

As if to hint "She doth but turn to taunt,
Pursued thro' golden sky, or silvery dome,
Or pictured earth; for spirit is her haunt,
Nor vainly to its temple will she come.
O'er form and feature she doth gently roam,
To settle, like a sungilt butterfly,
When nectar of the heart doth charm her home.
In curve of lip she dwells, in flashing eye—
In love's equipment, scorn's parade, fear's panoply!"

There have I sought thee, ah, how long, how oft!
Forms have I studied for their own dear sake,
And forms for thine—fond faces pure and soft
Who loved me, eyes that beamed and lips that spake
Of grace and glory; and as one doth break
A morning slumber, I have pardoned foe
And ruffled friend, if haply I might wake
The dreaming soul within; and thro' the glow
Of love or anger thy divinest beauty know.

Yea, as men pause before a work of Art,
A finished portrait, or a statue fair,
So I, a connoisseur, have stood apart
In life's long human gallery whene'er
I lit on aught dainty beyond compare.
Charms that the glancing crowd have hurried past
Have chained me—loveliness of contour, hair,
Hue, countenance, and mien, have held me fast.
Glory ephemeral, and glory born to last.

And looks have lit on me by golden chance,
On me unworthy of their precious wealth—
The lingering love-gaze and the passion-glance,
Full contemplation, and regard by stealth.
A happy member of Love's commonwealth,
My share hath fallen to me; while in hours
Of grief and gloom, and trouble, and ill health,
Sweet eyes, as of an angel from the bowers
Of Paradise, have calmed my heart with gentle showers.

But in them all, what have I won of thee?
Have I been more than as a baffled boy
Who steals upon the moth to watch it flee;
An angler startled by the gleaming joy
Of the upleaping trout he would decoy;
A moonlit serenader who doth plead
Beneath the lattice with a maiden coy;
Or one who, thinking he had sown the seed
Of a bright-tinted flower, wins but a homely weed?

As when the flaming eye of darkness opes
In summer lightning-gleam, and momently
We view enchanted plains, and groves and slopes,
That with fire-portalled Eden almost vie,
Till sudden gloom re-curtains earth and sky:
As when a lovely rainbow just behind
The stormy outlook hath escaped the eye
Till the fast-fading hues grow undefined;
So has it been with me; too soon bereft—or blind.

Nor have I followed thee by sight alone;
My hearing hath partaken in the quest,
Just missing thee in many a tender tone
And lovely cadence; longing to arrest

In vain some dying echo, whose bequest
Was the belief that thou wert surely there.
Hath music on the water stirred my breast,
Have evening bells chimed out upon the air
Without my wild lament, my passionate despair?

How I have thrilled when some piano played,
Or organ winged me to a heavenly height,
When for the moment earth has seemed arrayed
In vesture woven from the loom of light;
And all the world within has sparkled bright
As when meridian fires have asked the waves
To dance to music of their own delight!
Yet have I even then been he who craves
A smile from one who scorns to gratify her slaves.

And I have tracked thee by another sense,
For I have felt thee draw divinely near
In gentle perfume from the innocence
Of lily, violet, and all that rear
Their sweet shy faces in the new-born year,
And many a rose that looked thy fragrant throne,
Or scented bloom that decked the summer's bier;
Yet quickly hast thou vanished, zephyr-blown;
No trembling flower but what hath nodded "She is flown."

Nor hath the world of Sense alone been ranged;
I have pursued thee in the realm of Thought.
The lore of ages hath been interchanged
With what to-day's enlightenment hath taught,
And masterworks by Art and Fancy wrought.

Thro' many a fine felicity of speech,
Or happy inspiration, have I sought
To bring thine excellence within my reach—
In vain, in vain! I have been foiled by all, by each!

E'en in the lofty realm of noble Fact
Thou hast befooled me. I have lit on thee,
If ever, in the self-denying act,
The work of love, the deed of sympathy,
The hidden grace, the help none else could see.
With welling tear, and holden breath I oft
Have half unriddled thy fair mystery,
Yet but as one tiptoed, with movement soft,
Spies the leaf-hidden bird that spreads her wing aloft.

Aloft! ah! wilt thou lure me there? was that
Thine aim thro' all this splendid mockery?
May be, may be, for every air-fed gnat,
Dizzy with rapture in the summer sky,
Disdaining flowery earth, and dancing high
Above the flashing ripple of a stream,
Shames me, too fond of nether wealth to fly;
So fettered to the water-brink, whence gleam
The bubbling joys of Time, that I misread that dream.

That thrilling early vision—what was it,
And what the promise of that infant time?
But a sweet pledge that very Heaven should flit
Before my spirit, from that innocent prime
Thro' deepening life; that so the mortal clime
Befit her not, nor drowse her into dull
Oblivion of her Destiny sublime:
For ah! the daily opiates, how they lull
Into a deep content, and higher hope annul.

Let me not sleep like one mid Alpine snows
Bereft, in slumber, of all pain and ache!
As mountain angels keep him from repose
By flashing lights lest he should never wake,
So let no deathly torpor overtake
My spirit, bitten by the world's keen frost!
Thine intermittent gleams, O bid them break
Her calm relapses till the wild be crossed
And the Divine Hospice enfold the lorn and lost!

That Shelter won, adieu to fitful rays
And foiled endeavour, and benumbing cold!
Welcome! the banquet of thy promised gaze!
The prophecy fulfilled, I shall behold
The all of thee thy glimmering left untold;
And find that in belauding thee I bent
Within the Temple of God, manifold,
Yet One, Immutable, Omnipotent,
Whose Glory is with Earth's fair panorama blent.

NEGLECTED AFFECTION.

TOO late we know the worth of many a gleam,
Love's arrow from an angry cloud or mist—
The backward glance, the reconciling beam
That lit a wilful face we left unkissed.

Too late we feel the sweet unnoticed things
Whereby a heart would shew yet hide her love—
Shy violets, whose balm the zephyr wings
Past a self-centred dreamer in the grove.

Too late we feel them if unpitying Death
Have claimed the face, and spirited the heart:
And thro' memorial groves the phantom breath
Of the unvalued violets doth dart.

Too late we feel them if the living face
Be kissed by others, and the heart be cold:
If Love, in ending our long day of grace,
Begin another tale, more truly told.

O sadder than the thought of golden noon
Or crimson eve to a benighted one,
Is the dark recollection of Love's boon
Let go unprized, and none to comfort, none!

Day's dying splendour hath an after-glow;
The chill of midnight-darkness doth abate:
Nor tender light, nor hope, have they who know
The worth of slighted love too late, too late.

THE FLOWER OF MY SONG.

BEGOT in care, conceived in woe,
It was not born in mirth,
But in what answers to the snow
Wherein white flowers have birth.
God's faultless Bloom began to grow
Upon a wintry Earth.

Daughter of trouble and of bliss,
And nursed by hope and fear,
A father's law, a mother's kiss
Both shape its young career:
And like all wayward children, this
Now smiles, now wears a tear.

Ah, how the heart's tempestuous strife
Doth bid it bud and sprout!
Oh, how the sunshine of my life
Will bring its beauty out!
Unfolding when the rains are rife,
'Twill open mid the drought.

And haply, if from summer skies
Thro' many a genial hour
Day's golden and Night's silver eyes
Blend in maturing power,
I soon shall win the welcome prize
Of a completed flower.

And will it share the snowdrop's doom?
Ah! who can tell? yet I
Deem that song wins perennial room
Thro' its own purity:
And mine should be too pure a bloom
For men to let it die.

CALLED BACK.

FACES of line and hue
Fair to the last,
What hath become of you
Where ye have passed?

Less of you lingereth
In the dark tomb,
Than in the violets' breath
That from it bloom.

Yet if the mould be gone
Into the void,
All that hath thro' it shone
Lives undestroyed.

O to find where and how!
But ah! too vain!
Is there aught here and now
That doth remain?

Art may perpetuate
Much for our cheer;
But can she recreate
Glance, smile, and tear?

Memory fain would let
Naught of you slip—
How can we long forget
Brow, eye, and lip?

And if a portrait lack
Life from the soul,
Love can half charm you back
As a bright whole.

Oft when a frame or book
Shrines a dear face,
Almost a living look
Steals o'er its grace :

Oft when sad memory
Calls up the dead,
O'er the brow lip and eye
Strange light is shed.

Oft in a happy dream
More doth return,
Spirit, form, feature, beam
Kindle and burn.

What are they all but sparks
From the live fire
Of a hid soul that harks
To Love's desire ?

MAHDI MORTUUS.

Away from home, with heaven and earth so bright,
So full of cheer for body, heart, and brain,
A letter comes to turn my day to night,
My calm to storm, my joy to aching pain !

"A death?" you ask—too true; "the death of one
Most dearly loved and longed for?" right once more:
"A relative maybe, wife, daughter, son?"
No—'tis a dog I shed these heart-drops o'er!

But what a dog! a monarch mid his kind,
Brave, handsome, sprightly, clever, fleet of limb;
His room is empty, never shall I find,
Tho' seeking far and near, the like of him!

And yet a form of symmetry unique,
A fund of rare canine accomplishment,
Perished and past, should hardly wet the cheek,
Or even merit passionate lament.

Far more now quickens me—the priceless worth
Of love all vanished, loyalty all fled,
Attachment, all too rare on chilly earth,
Found to the full in my dear Mahdi dead.

So did they name him, partly for his hue,
Partly to honour a majestic port;
A sultan was he, a black hero too,
With emperors well worthy to consort.

Ah! there are hearts too stoically chill,
Eyes that too seldom either weep or frown!
Yet hours *do* come when, struggle as we will,
Upwelling tears cannot be driven down.

You never knew our Mahdi, if you hold
Us childish if we honour him with tears;
For we adored and loved him, young and old;
He mingled with us all, as with his peers—

I shall return, and my familiars meet,
A welcome group, when I have reached the gate:
But one as true as they will never greet
The master more in this terrestrial state.

My shrubs and flowers and fruitage I shall mark
In leafy shade, unseen beyond a doubt;
But never shall I hear a joyous bark
Assure me he had peeped and found me out.

I sought his kennel every morn and eve,
And knew if out he would return anon:
Ah! I may come again, and sadly leave—
Come all forgetfully to find him gone.

He, a retriever, never looked more proud
Than when he did his duty, carrying
Some trifle trusted to him, or allowed
To seek for and restore a hidden thing.

Yet, generous to a fault, he never clung
To what he valued most, but let it go
When a small poodle-mate, giddy and young,
Would fain, half envious, be humoured so.

My matin wandering, my vesper stroll,
Void of his company will lack their zest—
The care to keep the ardour in control
Which for his master's welfare fired his breast.

My dog! thou wouldst have given thy life for me,
Or had I gone the earlier, wouldst have pined
By the grave side.—Can any eulogy
I sing be over tender, over kind?

But wherefore weep for thee? a life was thine
As fair as any dog could hope to live—
Play for all faculties and powers canine,
A death whose pain was light and fugitive.

And when I see how ill thy fellows fare;
Oft at the hands that should protect and tend,
I thank the Power that left thee in our care
Not as a drudge, or plaything, but a friend.

O mystery of mysteries that Love
And Righteousness can leave full many a life
Like thine to woe, and calmly from Above
Look down on livelong pain, and mortal strife!

Marvel of marvels that the crew accurst
Who torture them to suffering's utmost throe
Still linger on to do their hideous worst,
While God remains above, and hell below!

Yet none of it was thine, and when the death
That comes to all o'ertook thee at the last,
Did aught—did any, wait the final breath
To waft thee to repose, life's turmoil past?

Why not, when one could scarce a virtue name
But what did shine in thee before our eyes?
If human loyalty could Eden claim,
Thou art in thine appropriate Paradise.

Our loving hands shall lay thine earthly part
Beneath the green or flower-bespangled sod;
But who can bury treasure of the heart?
Nor can decay touch aught that comes of God.

And whence if not from Him arose thy truth,
Thy love, self-sacrificing sympathy,
Patience in pain, and meekness amid ruth—
The all, in brief, that was of Christ in thee?

No Heaven for us if not for thee, methinks!
And, happy hope! we yet may meet again:
Our mutual love doth keep us living links
Of the now hidden yet immortal Chain.

"Friend, go up higher!" may be said to one
Who did true service in the lowest room.
God save the other, evil and undone,
In his kind mercy from a nether doom!

Yet shall we meet! thy deathless part, recast
From Nature's crucible in being new,
Shall greet me somewhere, somehow, at the last;
Till then, dear mate of Earth, adieu, adieu!

A PROPHECY.

SHALL we ever mingle
In the joy of a common life
Who are now so single
In feeling, so prone to strife?
Is there aught above thee,
Before, or around, that gives
Hope that all shall love thee,
And thou shalt love all that lives

Yes, the stars of twilight
In a silvery effluence blend
That the whole of their shy light
The shadowy earth may befriend.
In the golden weather,
When nature doth faint with thirst,
The clouds flow together
O'er the fever of all to burst.

Flowers are jointly shedding
Sweet perfume to charm the glade;
Bower and tree are spreading
Twined growth to give shelter and shade:
Banded flies are maying
To banquet the heart and eye;
The leagued birds are playing
Mid pause of their harmony.

All unite in chorus,
That in a sweet Age to come
The joy round and o'er us
Will find man its crown and sum.
Then in perfect union
Our strangeness and woe will cease;
And in full communion
The world shall know perfect peace.

A SEASIDE RHAPSODY.

CALM ocean is swelling,
As if to rehearse a new harmony;
White wavelets are spelling
A chorus to echo thro' earth and sky:
The winds seem to listen
Like angels who poise to unfurl their wings;
The sunny beams glisten
As harps that are turned flash their golden strings.

Do ye pause, gentle breezes,
To spirit me hence upon wings of joy
From trouble that teases
And cares that disturb, and delights that cloy?
Doth thy fire, happy gleaming,
Flame forth thro' the gloom to enchant my soul?
Can the swell and the streaming,
Glad sea, waft my heart on their rush and roll?

Methinks there now sleepeth
Along the bright beach many a vacant shell,
Whose guest ocean keepeth
Alive and unhurt thro' a boisterous spell.
Calm angels who lavish
On mortals delight from the Realm of grace,
A soul can ye ravish
Awhile, and leave here but a radiant face?

The music is bursting!
My vision is blinded by flashing gold:
My spirit is thirsting
To banquet on rapture and bliss untold.
Eternity's billows!
Enfold her and bear her to heavenly love,
That softest of pillows,
No sorrow can ruffle no care remove!

A DIAMOND-JUBILEE ODE.

FULL many a noon of beauty dies
With early promise unfulfilled.
Hope melts in vesper tears and sighs,
For matin music stilled.
How many a love, whose radiant birth
Glowed like the dawn on chilly earth,
Leaves those it made divinely one,
Like earth that weeps a vanished sun!

Not every reign that opened well
Hath worn its splendour to the last:
Nor every monarch kept the spell
That bound a nation fast.
Twice did a camp or city ring
While Israel cried "God save the King";
But Saul and Joash knew no day
That closed with a calm sunset-ray.

A people's reverence and love
Lit on the one for outward shew:
So high his stature, far above
The throng that surged below.
The other charmed them by the truth
And innocence of tender youth,
Sole heir, the single promise left
To those of Royalty bereft.

Great Queen! the merits blend in thee
For us who value moral height;
Thou pattern of nobility
To keep our virtue bright!
Thou heiress of a royal Race,
What marvel that thy maiden face
When first it met a nation's gaze
Evoked such loyalty and praise?

A sixty years hath fled, and we,
Who love thy Person, Throne, and Laws,
Outrival in our jubilee
Their unapproved applause.
We sing the glory that now seems
As far above their hopes and dreams
As noon excels the promise shy
That faintly streaked the orient sky.

A tranquil sunset, Lady fair!
Due evening splendour! Heaven and Earth,
Be all your bright enchantment there
To crown such grace and worth!

A lovely after-glow be shed
Upon us when the light is fled;
To linger long around the scene
That knew a grand and glorious Queen!

CLIFTON.

STRANGE likes we have, of sympathy begot;
Dislikes we feel whose cause no heart can tell;
Some features charm, while others draw us not;
One haunt doth lack a rival's potent spell.
But mark this marvel! to my view one place,
Unlike another, wears a human face,
Whose magic oft doth quicken me to feel
Her weeping 'mid my woe, her smiling 'mid my weal.

And such an one art thou! and scarce a line
I draw between thee, and a kindred heart:
If it interpret me, thou dost divine
My mood, and fitting balm or tone impart—
A friend may vex or chide me; never yet
Hast thou made memory ache, or spirit fret.
A loved one whispers cheer; hast thou no voice
Of stream or rustling wood to bid my heart rejoice?

I daily think of thee; my dreaming eye
Oft on thy peerless beauty opens wide:
I see thee beckon, and the glowing sky
Of that bright morn will find me at thy side:

Or if rude fate forbid, or duty foil,
Swiftly kind fancy wings me to thy soil;
Upon thy breezy upland I recline,
And terrace, garden, bridge, and grove and slope are mine.

Nor doth mere sympathy the love explain:
My youthful haunt, my manhood's home wert thou;
Association helped to forge the chain
For ever binding us—most firmly now.
O 'tis the outcome of a golden joy
Drawn from thy glory by a dreaming boy,
The product of full many an aim and plan
Nursed 'mid rare beauty by a wistful, anxious man!

'Tis the attachment born of tender fears,
And nameless thought, and aspiration high,
And disappointment, and despairing tears,
And happy things I never thought would die.
Thou art the sepulchre of many a scheme,
The cemetery of visioned hope and dream;
And lives that I had lost my all to save
Have found not far from thy delight a garden grave.

Yet without all thou wouldst have won my love;
Such charms could never have appealed in vain;
Thy speaking likeness hangs my couch above,
I look, and ere I sleep I look again.
Thy name arrests me, and I feel a flush
Of joy, and while they talk of thee I blush.
Thy memory doth thrill me, and inspire
My music, and doth wing my every word with fire.

Thy garb concerns me; do I like thee best
In vernal emerald, summer's rich brocade,
Triste autumn-robe, or white of winter, dressed?
Love's indecision brings its ready aid:
We fence with such a question and reply
In dubious terms of general eulogy.
One can but say, "I have no choice—in all
Thy dress enchants me, and thyself my heart doth thrall."

What of thy Past? I will not call thee born
Of the great city near, nor wast thou bred
By her alone; nay, she had left thee lorn
E'en now, but for the balm thy glory shed,
Thy healing ministry—one day they came
Who, peering, praised, and cradled thee in fame.
Better for thee had she who grandly toiled
Hard by, thy beauty shunned, and left it all unspoiled.

The charm that dazzled other eyes she marked,
And (as a relative befriends the girl
Whom unadmired she barely had remarked)
She fed and brought thee up, and joined the whirl
Of fashion for thy sake, and gave thee wealth,
Nay, in communion with thee found new health.
But ah! the hideous price—roads, quarries, rails,
Spoiled tangle, levelled trees, clipped groves, and tuneless vales.

As if a foster-mother were to trim
A fair young lady to a vulgar taste,
And crop her rippling ringlets for a whim,
Or deem her beauty an untidy waste:

And still vile hands profane thy sanctities,
Sweet victim of rude brains, and purblind eyes!
Ah! when a child to womanhood hath grown
Her form is sacred, and her loveliness her own.

Heiress of Fortune thus, the wealth and ease
That marked thy growth and progress wrong thee now:
Fashion sought other founts for her disease
And failed thee—but that high too placid brow
Bespeaks a character enthralled by sense,
Capacity much marred by indolence:
The vicious lines are on thy face which tell
That Fashion, quitting thee, bequeathed an evil spell.

Her shade revisits thee from time to time,
And nods approval; for the arboured walk
Is paced by beauty, and the bands still chime;
And health and wealth and vigour stroll, and talk,
And toy, and languish; and the winter dance,
And summer show, retain the old romance;
And Might remains content to waste the power,
Designed to move the world, in a fair Eden bower.

Dear leafy cloisters, sweet arboreal haunts,
Thorn-spangled plains! ye were not made for this,
But for the fostering of all that daunts
Life's barriers, and turns its woe to bliss—
For toil's refreshment, and for health's support;
For love's due food, but not for aimless sport,
Or a perennial lounge wherein to lurk
Deaf to the common call that summons each to work.

Yes, Fashion wronged thee by her early touch,
And thou dost woo the genius of thy youth:
Yet 'twere unfair to chide thee overmuch,
For the soft clime that steeps thee is in truth
The cause of half the languor, half the sloth
That for a while did paralyze thy growth—
That now doth dwarf thy energy, and wreck
Full many a scheme, and hold prosperity in check.

And in thy look and bearing I can read
That thou art stamped with an unchanging seal:
The deep, hard lines of a perpetual creed
Are graven on thee, not for thy true weal.
Who can forecast the Future? what are we
That our cramped views should bind posterity?
Ah! God forgive the holiest who stays
The Progress that all life and living thought obeys.

Lo! from that fettered faith what feuds have risen:
Souls peeping like spring-germs break thro' the chain,
And, skyward flowering, mock their early prison;
The pendulum of thought swings back again:
Extremes are vaunted: they who should have kissed,
Scorn fellowship, and on their due insist:
Peace vanishes; love flies so bleak an earth
While careless Gallios want to know Religion's worth.

And I, who turn on thee a lover's look,
Mourn o'er the manacles, and hate the strife:
Saintly and true they were who thus mistook
Belief for love, and protest for pure life—

Yet tho' they fettered sister haunts as well,
Blind to the tyranny of such a spell,
Where prophets chain, the priest is freedom's foe,
And then the people love, alas! to have it so.

Such are thy flaws: thy virtues shall I vaunt?
Ah! who can name the countless? yet, methinks,
An eulogy might well belaud a haunt
Of lofty affluence loyal to the links
That bind her to the penury below.
Like a true foster-child thou dost bestow
On thine old mother all her care could claim:
Thyself her glory, thou art proud to share her name.

And the wide world—how many a gentle life
Cares but for kin and country! yet I mark
In thee a thought for outer woe and strife,
A studious effort to begild their dark
Who grope and falter on in foreign climes;
Who weep and writhe beneath un-English crimes;
Whose single claim is that their lot is man's.
For all are patriots, few cosmopolitans.

And then thy culture—for I notice oft
A paradox in gay or easy lives—
The chainless spirit frets to soar aloft,
And mid the sloth art grows and learning thrives.
Thy laughing face for every sensuous line
Doth wear a look of something more divine—
The impress of high thought, the gentle grace
Of all that tutors self, be it a man or place.

But were thy virtues less, and vices more,
Fair empress of my heart! 'twould matter naught;
Love doth not calculate: its golden store
Is squandered oft, but never, never bought:
Who most deserve it sometimes get the least.
It is not so with thee; yet mine increased
The faultier I found thee: and the spell
That charmed, will charm me to the end—Farewell,
farewell!

WOMAN'S MINISTRY.

TO keep the tabernacle fair
Committed to her spirit's care,
That no ungentle touch profane,
Nor aught ignoble mar or stain
A calm exterior undimmed
By lamp low-burning or half-trimmed.
To let it look so pure and bright
That hovering angels fain to light
May settle there, nor only leave
Their fire, but glow from her receive—
That fluttering mortals may return
To one whose lantern thus can burn;
Nor like moths circling round a flame
Go less resplendent than they came.
That men may start to see such grace
Transparent thro' a human face;
And in the tranquil radiance find
The charm of sun and moon combined—

That living, it by day may shed
Warm love, and calm, by night—that dead
All viewing it mid many a tear
May think "a glorious soul dwelt here."

To beautify the temple where
Her spirit offers praise and prayer—
To spend the treasure of a heart
Renewed on all, and every part:
To let no talent be unused
In homage, nor one gift excused
From celebration of His worth
Who brought Heaven's glory down to earth:
To blend with the grand organ-roll
The music of a grateful soul:
To decorate the Holy Place
With vassal Nature's timely grace—
Bright Christmas evergreen to prove
The freshness of Incarnate Love;
White Paschal lilies whose sweet breath
Spells triumph over wintry death;
Pink Pentecostal peonies too
Fed on Heaven's Sunshine, Wind and Dew—
That men may mark the loving touch
Of a true woman pardoned much;
And Christ accept the work of one
Devout who "what she could, hath done."

To deem one human temple set
Apart for her to pay Love's debt
Of tender care and guardianship,
And tribute of heart, eye, and lip.

That fane (of father, brother, friend
Or husband), reverently to tend:
So far as stranger spirits can
Commingle—to adorn that man;
Exchange the withering blooms of vice
For deathless flowers of Paradise;
See that a tuneful heart doth raise
The melody of joy and praise,
Perfumed the while with incense rare
The breathing of perennial prayer.
To watch lest aught without him be
Untrue to the hid harmony:
Nor this, that all be spent on one
But that her love, on him begun,
May grow till many more display
Her gentle care, her bright array:
Yet so that men in one behold
The tale of woman's love full told.

To serve within the temple vast
Of Nature, where her lot is cast;
To lightly tread, and whisper low,
And wander gently to and fro;
Not aimlessly as if to shirk
Aught of her own peculiar work,
But often pausing to admire
Dome, pavement, tracery and choir;
To join, 'mid lights all burning dim,
The common prayer, the general hymn;
To hear the many tones that teach;
For God doth from that pulpit preach;
And every day is Sunday there;
And all is Sacramental fare;

And truth and love and hope in grief,
The Articles of all belief;
To keep the loiterers in view
If haply they may worship too;
To hold in love and reverence
What meets the eye of faith and sense;
That so when she hath left that Fane
Her ministry be judged not vain.

PRESSED FLOWERS.

WITHERED blooms, your grace and breath
While they lingered lent me joy!
Now I cherish all that Death
Could not wreck or Time destroy.
Wings the summer glory took—
Little of its wealth would stay.
See the pages of my book
Fold you lovely in decay!

Faded flowers of many a mind,
Wit, imagination, thought,
Once, in forms of beauty shrined,
Fragrance to my soul ye brought!
Spent is the aroma now,—
Yet the leaves that hold you fill
Shelves of honour, and I vow
They are turned and studied still.

Blossoms of the heart, your spell
Once perfumed the whole of life!
Tender things too sweet to tell,
Love-looks, kisses after strife,
Tears and whispers, have ye fled?
Nay, in Memory's page ye rest,—
From the vanished and the dead,
Ye are left—the one bequest.

A SONG OF GLADNESS.

Joy, joy, joy,
In the flush of the tender Spring;
In the scent of the field and the laugh of the lane,
And the flutter of fairy wing.
In the swelling of buds of thought,
The unfolding of flowers of the heart;
In the music of love, and the new note taught
By Nature unwedded to Art.

Joy, joy, joy,
In the Summer of blossom and glow;
In the silken wings furled 'mid the forest shade,
And the warbling hushed or low.
In the splendour of thought's fair bloom,
Heart-roses, heart-lilies, full blown;
In a love that hath left glitter, song, and perfume,
To banquet on bliss of its own.

Joy, joy, joy,
In the Autumn of mild decay;
In the mellow corn reaped, and the woodland tints,
And the warblers that will not stay.
In the harvest that memory yields,
The hue of heart-flowers as they fade,
Hope's watery sunset o'er withering fields
Where all but the fruit is decayed.

Joy, joy, joy,
In the Winter of Nature's death;
In the desolate dingle and flooded field,
Icy Dawn, and grey Eve's bitter breath.
In the gloom of the palsied brain
And the heart-garden frosted o'er:
For Love cannot die, and there yet doth remain
Full many a Summer in store.

MY FATHER'S BIBLE.

It peeped from out the pile of books
A random hand had strewn around,
And begged of me by tender looks
To lift it from the ground.
"A thirsting eye," it seemed to say,
"Drank in my beauty day by day;
A hungry heart devoured my worth—
His eye and heart who gave thee birth."

Alas! it charmed me not for long;
Mine was the tale so often told:
I took vile ore of tale and song,
And left the precious gold.
All folly hath the seed within
Of its reward: I did not win
What study might have won—nay worse,
I toyed with sin, I wooed the curse.

My Father, did thy spirit plead
With mine, or had the Truth a spell
At length to make me lift and read
What thou didst love so well?
Mid feelings I could not resist
The Book was reverently kissed.
Ah! wisdom also doth contain
The germ of what her converts gain.

And lo! it was as when one finds,
Back in a happy haunt, each flower
Shed an aroma that reminds
Of some sweet bygone hour.
Rare perfume from each lovely tale
Was borne upon the heavenly gale
That swept my spirit, and I read
As one reviving from the dead.

O it was wisdom, after years
Of disregard the leaves to turn!
They brimmed my wintry eyes with tears;
They made my bleak heart burn.

The impress strange and sweet they wore
Of him whose name and guise I bore;
In part from notes on many a text
Born of his mood when glad or vexed.

These lighting up dark words of Truth,
It grew on me that here was one
Who left them not in age or youth
Dishonoured or undone.
Once more, a boy I sat beside
The parent fond, the gentle guide,
Whose glowing spirit all could trace
In tender look, and loving face.

Nor this alone—the Book portrayed
His likeness Who transfigured all
In every age, on whom He made
A glory-beam to fall.
Dark ancients shone like stars thro' Him;
And soon I traced in outline dim
Familar features, half-Divine,
The Christ that lit thee, Father mine!

Bright stars, for all their silvery spell,
Are too removed from twilit men,
Who steer by earthly light as well
Thro' quicksand, reef, or fen:
And so the saintly tales of old
Are far above us, till retold
In some pure homely life, whose glow
Is round the wanderer below.

And such was thine—a life devout
Born of belief that here alone
Was food Divine, and all without,
Bread never, but a stone.
Not thine perchance their larger creed
Who Christ in man and nature read,
And deem that here with high intent
The human and Divine are blent.

But perish strife! it matters not
That we, imbued with modern lore,
Reject or foster much of what
Was held or shunned of yore;
If, following our simple sires,
We lead the life this Book requires;
No creed is wrong, whate'er it be,
That makes men, Father, live like thee!

We gaze upon the pictures true
Of soldier-ancestors, and hope
That since they live in us, we too
With foes may bravely cope:
So, not despairingly I look
Upon thy portrait in this Book;
And thank the Power that made me wise
Thereon to rest my rebel eyes.

NATURE'S SUPPLY.

TWO cravings mock us here: the one for change,
Born of our swift mortality, yet nursed
By many a lovely gleam, fitful and strange,
Of that eternity which held us first;
How emptily we try to quench the thirst!
We fret and chafe against monotony;
We quaff a sparkling current, and unversed
In life's sad lore we leave it satisfied;
And lo! our fevered lips return to the cool tide.

The other craving is for permanence:
For *that* the God within us genders sighs
Amid the ecstasy of thrilling sense:
Eternal fountains flash before our eyes
Untasted, to delude and tantalize.
We are like those who haunt a summer stream
Fed by no rain from the unpitying skies:
Or desert pilgrims led on by the gleam
Of taunting hopes that fade like an illusive dream.

Yet He who made us thirst doth bid us drink
Here, even here, from an unfailing spring.
Nature doth beckon us (a lovely link
Between Himself and every human thing)
That to her reservoir our want we bring,
Where is enough awhile our thirst to slake
For that calm constancy whereof I sing:
And when we covet change, if we betake
Our fever to her fount, we lose the throb and ache.

Immortal mountains, never-failing sea,
Perennial plains, undying firmament!
I feel your spell; your power encircles me;
With my divinest being are ye blent.
Ye are not like the faces o'er me bent
In love one moment, and the next in blame:
Nor like the cherished forms that Death hath rent
From my lone life. Ye always look the same,
A witness to the truth of the unchanging Name.

Yet do ye meet the other fond desire;
No day, no hour, but a reviving draught
From your deep cistern cools my spirit-fire.
Never have I rejoiced but ye have laughed,
And never wept, but ye with subtle craft
Have made your beauty melt in answering tears:
And each revolving season have I quaffed
The rippling verdure, vowing that the years
Hold each a varying wealth unguessed till it appears.

Abiding rest—'tis graven on the whole!
All looks a quiet dream, an endless sleep,
Untouched by times that speed, and tides that roll—
His empire Who perpetual state doth keep:
Yet ceaseless movement too—shy joys that peep
And vanish, wings that come and go; bright flowers
That wither to the gales that o'er them sweep.
High grandeur, which doth mock our fleeting powers,
Above ephemeral grace, and lovely motion towers.

Sweet natural vision! 'tis thy charm unique
To our twin longing thus to minister—
Thus to allay our every whim and freak
By means that best befit its character;

A spell so mighty, potent sorcerer!
Lurks in that blend of changefulness below
And constancy above, that I refer
All moods to thee, I who am mingled so,
The heir of lofty calm, the sport of ebb and flow.

INSOLUBLE.

WE cannot mingle, or unscreen
The secrets of the soul: between
Two lives must run a river fast—
The current of a separate Past.
A chasm that no power can bridge
Doth part each spirit: from the ridge
Of a sole being mine now tries
To track the source of yon wet eyes.

A figure fronts my open sight,
The loveliest in a scene of light:
Beauty hath tasked herself to mould
A shape of symmetry untold—
A face like summer on warm hills,
And smiling fields and rippling rills—
Yet eyes like the despairing gray
Of rain, unlit by bow or ray.

Lone weeper! art thou yet aware
That one would fathom thy despair?
For my keen spirit felt somehow
That thine was on the watch just now.

Stay as thou art until I trace
The springs that vitalize thy face!
The telescope of sympathy
I lift, the hidden fount to spy.

Ah! who can rightly read a heart
Wherein he hath as yet no part?
Nay, can the most discerning tell
The joy that haunteth many a cell,
The ambushed hope, the lurking fear,
From whose embrace is born a tear
Rocked in the cradle of a sigh
Ere globuled in a heavenly eye.

All vainly vainly I employ
My skill in fathoming thy joy;
The cause, the nature of thy hope
Are curtained from my telescope:
The wistful fear—I cannot think
From what a saint like thee doth shrink.
So wise thou lookest; passion-tears
Flow but from fools, and mutineers!

Drops have no right upon a cheek
That doth tranquillity bespeak.
A summer-drought on Indian plains
Is not the time for stormy rains:
Unclouded sunshine bears no shower:—
Doth dew lie on a noonday flower?
One might as confidently look
For truth in a bright fairy-book.

Thou sweet enigma! I divine
That now thy spirit glimpses mine.
But wherefore doth she lift her glass?
My barrier she may not pass.
Infinitude the vision blocks;
Ah! cruel gulf, ah! lonely rocks;
We cannot one the other reach—
Yet we can signal, each to each.

Drop not thy glass, while mine I hold!
The secret need not be untold;
Our spirits may not cross the fence,
Yet meet me in the realm of sense!
The river of the Past is wide;
O bid my shallop brave the tide!
And, if no bygone intercept,
Tell me thyself why thou hast wept.

ON A SUDDEN DEATH.

THREE joys of yestertide I valued well—
A fragrant flower, like noonday, golden-bright,
A silvery star with tender evening-spell,
A friend who solaced me from morn to night.

To-day the sweet flower blossoms as before,
This eve the star a gentle beam will shed;
No day, no night, of Time for evermore
Will bring the human cheer—my friend is dead!

Dead, tho' I met him but a fortnight past
Smiling and well, and no foreshadowing look
Bid me regard that greeting as our last,
The closing chapter of our friendship's book!

Dead, tho' they never dreamt who bore his name
That such a soul and body thus could part,
Dead, tho' no premonition thrilled my frame,
No sadness drew a curtain round my heart!

Dead, while I trifled the dark hour away;
And none of them mid their unconscious mirth
Did aught that haply, keeping Death at bay,
Had kept thee with me upon sunny Earth!

Dead, and I left to live without thy love,
Twin of my spirit, double of my soul!
Die, flower of Earth! and deathless star above
Fade from the Heaven that his spirit stole!

Nay, linger on! for are ye not the best,
The truest emblems of his history?
Stay! while mine eyes upon your beauty rest,
My thoughts upon the mortal mystery—

His lower life was imaged by the flower—
Sheltered and solitary, shy and calm,
Unfolding simple wealth and quiet power,
And breathing, like its perfume, tender balm.

As gentle, and unselfish, as yon bloom,
A joy to all, he did but live to fill
Sweetly and well his own appointed room,
With head bowed meekly to his Maker's will.

God's sunshine came—he gladly drank it in :
God's storm blew on him—but he did not strive :
Were not both needful for the flower to win
Its proper beauty, to unfold and thrive ?

The tranquil star doth figure his true life,
The higher Being hid with Christ in God—
With Him Who shone thro' nether pain and strife,
"The Son of Man in Heaven" while Earth he trod.

If ever mortal shared that Life Divine,
The quiet born of virtue, it was thou !
No star to duty true could brighter shine,
No Christian better keep the saintly vow.

Sweet flower, my passion wronged thee ! never shed
Thy fragrance, but stay on in lovely bloom !
Alas ! the tender eye, the shaking head
Tell me thou too shalt share his mortal doom.

O changeless star of evening ! thou alone
Of all my trinity of joy canst stay :
The flower must wither ere the spring be flown ;
The loving face hath marbled into clay.

Pure token of immortal Life ! shine on,
That I may read his glory in thy glow—
And feel he changeth not where he hath gone,
But from his Heaven doth lighten me below.

UNFORGOTTEN.

THERE stole a deepening gloom
Over our golden trance:
Ah! how the thunder-boom,
The fiery lightning-glance,
The gale, the blinding tears
Float back from the far years.

Enfolded once again,
Fair grew our dream of love:
A greener earthly plain,
A bluer heaven above
Enchanted us—but yet
I *would* that strife forget!

Born of the feud, fresh flowers
Of present beauty smiled:
A future too was ours
That from the past beguiled.
Now, flowers and future gone
The past I feed upon.

O pasture, 'mid thy bliss
Are black unhappy trees!
Memorial vow and kiss
Were Eden but for these—
These growths of love left dark
By passion's fatal mark.

I shun the blue and green,
To haunt the dark and drear
Where from a lovely scene
Our quarrels stand out clear.
Why did the lightning blast,
And will the ruin last?

ON THE SEA OF LIFE.

FATHER! the other vessels seem
In calm, tho' mine be tossed;
Their sails have caught the golden gleam
That never mine hath crossed:
Their voyage looks a sunny dream
While mine all charm hath lost.

Poor child! thy sad complaint is their's,
They covet thy delight:
Each his own destiny compares
With those that look more bright;
Yet every mortal mariner shares
Calm, sunshine, storm, and night.

Father! I journey quite alone
They are so distant all;
They hardly signal when I moan,
Or heed me if I call:
Hath ever breeze to any blown
The ills that me befall?

Dear child! they tell me that of thee:
In vain the call and cry:
From the large lonely human sea
Prayer doth but reach the sky.
All must uplift the plaint to Me
Who pine for sympathy.

Father! I fear me that no shore
Awaits my shallop frail.
Yon dim horizon purpled o'er
Enfolds full many a sail;
I doubt not 'tis their golden door
To rest, who do not fail.

My child! no vessel I have wrought
And launched is wrecked at last:
Awhile some look the whirlwind's sport
On rock or shallow cast;
Yet all at length shall win the port;
And, trust me! thou, not last.

SPELLS OF THE NIGHT.

Oft before we sink to sleep
All is gloom and misty tears,
As when clouds of evening weep
Ere the daylight disappears.

Yet with fiery wings unfurled,
In new ecstasy we rise
To a bright and lovely world,
Canopied by glittering skies.

How was it I woke to-day
Joyous, tho' I longed at eve
That my soul could wing her way
To a clime where none can grieve?
Hath she wandered there, and seen
Glories that the world of sense
While its shadows intervene
From our wakefulness doth fence?

Seers have whispered that in birth
Every soul doth bear the trace
Of past splendour to the Earth
That becomes her dwelling-place:
Doth my mortal part, new-born
Daily from the realm of rest,
So receive back every morn
The transfigured spirit-guest?

Sleep! for all thou dost impart,
Whether human or Divine,
Be the music of a heart
Ravished into glory thine!
For they yield thy due, I think,
Only who behold in thee
A communicating-link
With a veiled Eternity.

FORTUNE-TELLING.

THERE are who study sleeping earth,
And read her history from birth:
The quiet heaven is read by some
To know what changes are to come;
While others find the human palm
An augury of storm or calm.

I cannot read your life unless
Your face doth wear earth's dreaminess:
The heaven of your blue eye must shine
With sunny splendour into mine:
Nay more—the oracles demand
That you repose in mine your hand.

A hasty word might baffle me,
And mar my patient scrutiny;
One look away and I am foiled;
My reading of the heaven is spoiled;
If your hand struggles to be free,
Adieu to all my palmistry!

Your earthly tale, I tell it now—
No quaking hath convulsed that brow;
No hidden fire disturbed the grace,
The contour of that lovely face;
And yet the features here and there
Reveal faint lines of character;

Lines adown which the current joys
Have tinkled in harmonious noise,
Lines that attest the ebb and flow
Of tenderness, but hardly woe;
The faintest furrow that brief ill
Could grave, perhaps may linger still.

Your world hath been a fairy bower
An arbour both from heat and shower,
Whence peeping sadness in affright
Hath fled in vision of your light;
An ocean doth your earth enzone
Which ne'er a hurricane hath known.

Your heavenly record? here the sign
I mark of intercourse Divine;
Were truth and rectitude not dear
Would that pure eye have been so clear?
Had you from honour been beguiled
It could not thus have shone and smiled.

Not as the heartless silent sky
That chills our hope is that kind eye—
The sunny ray, the moonlight beam,
That mock the while they make us dream;
But as the Heaven concealed behind—
The throbbing Heart, the thoughtful Mind.

It beams with hope, it flashes zeal,
And sympathy with all appeal;
It laughs with joy, it weeps with pain,
Yet shows the rainbow thro' the rain;
'Tis like the sky in this—that woe
Is lightened by its genial glow.

And if you ask, "Doth it display
A sign of change?" I answer, "Nay."
'Twill but improve, that heavenly tale:
Love, Truth and Virtue cannot fail.
Change holdeth naught but evil's curse,
With God for doctor, Hope for nurse.

Your earthly future, do you ask?
To tell it is no easy task.
The hand that doth in mine repose,
What will be wrought by it, who knows?
Some marks are there which auger ill:
Yet that may be averted still.

If it be free, I fear that life
Holds small tranquillity, much strife:
If it should clasp another's, you
May find him false to one all true:
If it remain—why loose your hold
With one sweet prophecy untold?

SHADOW AND SUNSHINE.

ONE gentle eve, while vowing
True love and lasting troth,
A quiet sky with closing eye
Shed tears upon us both;
White blossoms wandering from the may
Foretold a severed lot,
Frail bluebells shook, and from a spray
The merle piped "Trust her not!"

All vainly did they warn me;
Her tones were honey-sweet;
So rare a grace, so fair a face
Knew nothing of deceit.
What right had sunset, bird, and flower
To mar a hope so glad?
But ah! she fled one fatal hour,
And left me lone and sad.

One tender morn there reached me
A letter writ in tears:
"Her love," she said, "had never fled;
'Twas mine, as in old years.
A glancing sunbeam, a blithe song,
A snowdrop's purity
Prayed me to overlook her wrong;
And back she flew to me.

A SONG FOR THE SORROWFUL.

SAD hearts, will ye never revive?
All Nature is wronged by your gloom;
For winter doth wail that the spring may arrive,
Who but weeps that the summer may bloom,
The thunder clouds gather to burst
In a flood of new life o'er the plain;
Why even the blackthorn all gloomy and cursed
Will wear a white mantle again!

Wet lids that abandon delight,
Ye are shamed by the orb of the day,
And the silvery calm that the many-eyed night
From the dusk of her heart doth display!
Sad lips, if ye will not rejoice,
Ye are scorned by the lark on the wing,
That pipes a gay carol to bid men rejoice
Ere winter have yielded to spring!

Soon flow the gay sparkle and froth
Of the tide that is ebbing from shore:
The whirlwind now whistling to north
Hath westerly sunshine in store:
And Fortune's sad current will turn;
Her gale to fair quarters shall veer;
Yet better than wait for her fickleness, learn
To scorn her by gladness and cheer!

UNMATED.

THE gentle Powers, how well they tutor man
To the appointed plan,
So foreign to the heart
At first, of an Eternity apart!
Singly we come, and singly we depart:
As if it thus were shewn
That after-being is, like former-life, alone.

Here in our pupilage 'tis slowly borne
Upon the heart forlorn;
Seclusion were not good,
Linked as we are in a high brotherhood:
Nor could we win it even if we would.
'Tis thro' a fancied mate
For ever failing us we reach the single state.

Tho' from the first full many a hint and sign
Should lead us to divine,
However Earth delude,
That our Eternal lot is solitude.
Here none can on our joy and grief intrude;
And 'tis too sadly plain
That e'en to willing minds none can true access gain.

O, how we woo them, kinsman, lover, friend!
And fancy that we blend;
And dream of unions made
Ere twin souls were in fleshly garb arrayed.
Unions which Time and Change shall ne'er invade;
Which Death's cold kiss shall seal,
And no Eternal law can alter or repeal.

We deem our love unchanging as the sun
When first we feel at one;
To find, alas, too soon!
That it hath varying phases like the moon:
Till something comes to sever the commune;
And henceforth we are far
Asunder in our course as wandering star from star.

Beggared of human love, or with it too,
The pining heart will woo
Unmarriageable things—
Art, fame, wealth, wisdom, cheer—and firm it clings
Thereto, till each in turn unfurls sad wings,
To vanish from the fool
Unlettered in the lore of life's relentless school.

Time-loves! what are ye but the scaffolding
By whose support we bring
A perfect edifice
Of earthly being to the realm of Bliss,
Or failing of it, to the dark abyss?
Then will ye fall away,
Each that hath held us up, all that have been our stay.

And yet no scaffolding could serve the part
Ye play ere ye depart;
For as your spell doth roll
Over her surface ye enrich the soul:
Ye heal the wounds that else might not be whole:
Ye fit her for the lot,
Where no experience of Earth shall be forgot.

Father of spirits, we Thy progeny
Can but resemble Thee!
The Majesty Divine
We here inherit lets none intertwine
With other, and our destiny is Thine—
All, in harmonious blend;
Each, in a unity that hath no term, no end.

A STUDY IN STILL LIFE.

FAIREST of the forms around,
Languid thro' the balmy heat!
Lulled by many a murmuring sound,
Thine unconsciousness I cheat.
Chequered more than ocean bright,
Stranger than my story-book,
Seems the tale of shade and light
Told me in thy quiet look.

Waves! still chant your lullaby;
Warblers! pipe no ardent lays;
Lest she lift a startled eye
To my penetrating gaze.
None can tell the storied wealth,
Read the true, the hidden life,
Till he turn a glance by stealth
On the sleep of care and strife.

For the lines of conquered care
Score that deep tranquillity;
Marks of conflict too are there—
Battles crowned by victory.
No mere innocence of youth
Could evolve so pure a face;
Tempted Right, beleaguered Truth
Vaunt their triumph in its grace.

On the beauty I behold
God hath set the hall-mark true,
Stamping her as finest gold,
Figured with His image too:
For the workings that have scarred
Nature's smoothness are akin
To the furrows that so marred
One Who met and vanquished sin.

Lips of love! how many a balm
Ye have dropped on grief and pain;
Eyes of hope! how kind and calm
Ye will look unsealed again.
Ah! what meekness; such a brow
No earth-coronet adorns;
What if angels view it now
Circled with a crown of thorns!

Birds and billows! chime aloud;
Lady wake! I long to know—
I, so earthly, selfish, proud,
All that glorifies thee so—
I, unworthy e'en to tread
Near a virtue so divine:
Wake, and pardon me, and shed
Thy heart's fragrance over mine!

JOY IN SEASON.

SPRING is sleeping in her heart;
Be the winter ne'er so chill,
Everything shall play the part
Nature meant it to fulfil.
What if stormy tears and sighs
Vex her spirit from above!
One sweet morning she shall rise
To a golden world of love—

Love, like an unopened book
With a story soon begun—
Lurking in his troubled look
Who will shortly be her sun.
Heaven shall gild her with his kiss,
Bloom her by his balmy breath;
In the dawning of their bliss
Spring shall wake from wintry death.

Beauty's robe her heart shall don
Jewelled with sweet flowers of hope;
Thawing rills shall tinkle on,
Freshening fairy plain and slope;
Music her delight shall tell;
All, enchanted, soon shall sing
Love's new lay; while thro' her spell
Other winters yield to spring.

A PHILOSOPHIC OUTLOOK.

I MARKED them all, the wooers and the won,
Love's harmony begun,
Blend in a passion-kiss—
Pledge of a spirit-bond, a heavenly bliss;
Hope's golden promises fulfilled in this
The climax of delight,
The spring without a fall, the day that hath no night!

I watched them all, the runners in the race
For comfort, wealth, or place—
Each dreaming that the goal
Of his ambition was a rounded whole,
The thing that would content him body and soul—
Aflush with hope and strife,
And grasping in the end what to his view was Life.

I saw them all, the men of art and thought,
By inspiration taught
Heaven's secrets, and impelled,
In mighty madness that could not be quelled,
To beautiful expression; each upheld
Mid toil and weary sigh
By the heart's highest hope—of Immortality.

And then I studied Nature, who the while
Cheered them by look and smile.
Perchance it was a dream,

But on her face a mockery did seem
To lurk, in moonlit calm and sunny beam;
As tho' at heart she laughed
O'er the success of some deep-laid design of craft.

Was it mere fancy that I heard her say,
"I set them all to play;
And thro' the fervent flame,
Each doth unconsciously fulfil my aim:
Tho' they are cheated, they enjoy the game;
And sportiveness must tire,
And vain satiety must crown the heart's desire?

"All serve the Kind thro' this their fiery mirth:
The lovers people Earth;
The runners for a prize
Keep the World going by their agonies,
And make it richer thro' their enterprize:
The seer and artist give
Rare treasure to the Race thro' hoping they may live."

So plain this seemed to me, I held it true;
For on a nearer view
Were lovers who scorned change,
But whom long years or chance did yet estrange;
And victors who their guerdon would exchange;
And sons of thought and art,
Now careless of all fame the Future could impart.

And in my soul was born a hideous doubt
I could but reason out—
Doth she implant the hope
Of life to come that we may better cope

With earthly evil? is a telescope
To spy a dim fair Land
Put for the common weal in each deluded hand?

Yet studied more minutely than before
A truer look she wore:
Marks of maternal care
Blent with the guile, which now appeared more fair;
As if with nobler aim she laid the snare;
And in her face I read
Love, sympathy, and truth, as tho' her voice had said:

"Will not a Mother calm their after-fret
Whom she to play hath set?
Each heart I have beguiled
To loftier joy, in view whereof I smiled.
And love parental singles every child;
The common good were won
At too extreme a cost with any left undone.

To the large Love for which the spirit yearns
The sated lover turns.
What tho' the prize be vain?
The runner reaps the fruit of toil and pain,
In courage, skill, and patience that remain.
Hath seer or sceptic proved
The dead have thrilled not when posterity approved?"

All this was borne upon my happier heart
Lest the great hope depart
That savours life, and makes
Amends for all our troubles and mistakes—

The hope which Nature, maybe for our sakes
Doth not affirm, but prop
By many a token should our faith decline or drop.

For now the sun, ere I withdrew my gaze,
Beamed acquiescent rays:
A cheerful wind did blow
O'er trees and flowers to make them nod me, "No,
This is not all, thou art a babe below.
We bloom, we fall, we rise,
As thou and all thy kind fail but to seek the Skies."

NEGLECTED CHANCES.

LOST opportunities! ye danced
Before us once, and smiled and glanced
Like fairy maids, each fain to bless
Another with her happiness.
Hope shone in your bewitching look,
And Fancy spread her glowing book:
In vain, in vain! we did not seize
The boon, but lingered in our ease.

And now we muse, as men reflect
On lovers lost thro' sheer neglect.
"Did I," they ponder, "seem too coy?
Did her coquetry mar my joy?
Or did her warmth outflame my care?
How sweet she looked, how bright and fair!
Fool that I was. O gentle Fate
Have pity! call her back!"—too late!

Too late? Ah yes—if ye return
'Tis but to bid us vainly burn.
Ye come as a dear courtship seems
To live again in empty dreams.
Ye linger but as echoes last;
As tints that tell of summer passed;
As vivid gleams to shew how bright
Our way had been with your delight.

Ye lie uneasy in your grave,
Dead chances that none cared to save!
For ghostly vengeance oft ye rise
To taunt the slothful and unwise.
Their wild appeal who did not choose
Your warm embraces, ye refuse.
The living charm we would not clasp;
The phantom now eludes our grasp.

CHEER AMID DARKNESS.

THE dusk, for all its hint of harm,
Hath many a compensating charm.
No swell at dawn is half so bright
As curling waves that flash by night.
The stars of silver, shy by day,
Beam forth in many a lovely ray.
The night's musician trills a song
That shames the merry matin throng.

Sheet lightning, that we scarce behold
At noontide, floods the green with gold.
While steps of flaming beauty dart
From clouds whose thunder awes the heart.

So, when the shadows fall around
A faithful spirit, is it found:
The rippling care, the billowy strife
Are edged with glory, tipped with life.
Dead dear ones, mid earth's splendour veiled,
Bend o'er the heart whose sun hath paled;
And living lips divinely sing
Of love that hath not taken wing.
A sudden blaze from opening skies
Makes Earth a peep of Paradise;
And if a tempest thunder, lo!
On fiery stairs bright angels glow.

RENOVATION.

THE hope that shone to vanish unfulfilled,
The faded dream, joy's tale left half untold,
The love that fortune marred, or absence chilled,
The all that fired the happy days of old—

Fed by heart-fuel did they vainly burn?
And o'er the ashes do we vainly weep?
Creator true, is nothing to return?
Thy golden promise wilt Thou fail to keep?

Nay, phœnix-like there surely will arise
From each spent ember a diviner bliss
(The true successor of what flames and dies)
To make another world atone for this.

OXFORD IN RETROSPECT.

SMILES are thy due, thou haunt of happy years,
Nay, ringing laughter over bygone mirth!
How comes it that I hardly check the tears
Which rise unbidden while I sing thy worth?
O! thou art with the things that could not last:
Home joyaunce, nursery rapture, school delight,
And many more, which the unyielding Past
Restores to naught but hallowing Memory:
And thou art mantled in such tender light
Thro' her soft charm; and my dear days with thee
Look so divine, that I play truant mid my glee.

For oft my heart doth wander from the throng,
The merry scenes that I recall so well,
To muse on graver ones; some that belong
To thee, and some begotten of a spell
Of gloom that shadowed half that golden time:
And oft I dream o'er some death-silenced tone
That lent its triumph to our vocal chime,
Or some warm heart that distance doth estrange.
Shine out, fair City, that to thee back flown,
While o'er thine unforgotten joys I range,
My happy music may no more to sadness change!

If memory sweep a finished life, I think
Two spots will claim the tenderest regard—
One is the place of birth, that golden link
With ante-natal being; so I guard
Devoutly in my heart thy terraced lawn
And ample portico, and gabled eaves,
Shy Worcester, my first mansion in the dawn
Of cloistered being! the enchanted scene
Mine eyes first lit upon mid April leaves
And music, tho' milleniums intervene
Were hallowed as thy Fane, and as thy garden green.

And then if after-life should all be spent
Within one home, that were the other spot.
I but a babe in college-being bent
My steps to thee, and shared thine honoured lot,
Grey Merton, whom I glory to call mine!
Firstborn of many sisters, archetype
Of cloistered harmony, where sage divine
And shy philosopher blend happily
With giddy students callow and unripe,
Kind to their folly, if they dance not to their pipe.

Smile on me, Merton, as thou oft hast done
When (backward gazing from a primrose plain,
Or cowslip mead, or violet vale) the sun
Gilding thy distant tower hath made me feign
My flowery walk to be the cultured way
Whereof my sojourn in thee was the start!
Or when, a hill surmounted, the soft ray
That gilt thy pinnacles hath bid me think
That save for thee I had not climbed: my heart
Before I knew thee was of those that shrink
From steep endeavour's base and lofty effort's brink.

But in a life reviewed (as when the eye
Star-gazing rests on many a point of light
Purer than others in a purple sky)
We single out some mansions of delight;
So doth enchanting Magdalen now share
My heart with Christ Church, Trinity, and New,
And lettered Balliol, nor can I forbear
A tender backward glance at Oriel,
And calm sequestered Corpus: and I view
All Souls' and Wadham tenderly as well;
While round me fair St. John's hath wove a magic spell.

Bid me now dream of thee as a bright whole,
Dear Oxford, twofold in thy charm; a form
Of beauty that enshrines a twofold soul,
One that befits thy genius—grey and green!
Grey as thy centuries of hoary Time,
Thy doctors with their venerable mien,
Thy long tradition, and old classic lore—
Green as the fresh hearts in their youthful prime,
Who star the quad or thro' the gateway pour,
Bent on new rivalry in wicket, ball, and oar.

O how I love that form! thine aged look
Is precious as my mother's time-worn face;
The scars and furrows live in memory's book
Like the dear portrait of her saintly grace.
Thy fretted stonework, battlements and spires
Are as her lines of character, or those
That tell of triumph over youthful fires
And point to calm above and Heavenly joy;
Thy chiming bells are as the tones that rose
From her dear lips to teach me, when a boy,
And guide me to the Right, or from the Wrong decoy.

No less I linger o'er thy youthful mien,
The freshness of thy beauty, the bright robe
That mantles thee of spring and summer green.
Thy garden-secrets was I wont to probe,
The flowery labyrinth, the leafy gloom:
Thy terraced groves were my perennial haunt.
Like one who courts a beauty in her bloom,
First, all enchanted me, and then, each trait;
For learning soon to love her, he will vaunt
Half-hidden charms unfolding day by day,
As he begins to know each turn and mode and way.

Let them examine me who know thee best,
In garden-lore, and I will point them out
Each evergreen wherein shy blackbirds nest,
Each bough from which the happy thrushes shout,
The robin's haunt, the redstart's ivied wall,
The undergrowth of the sweet nightingale:
And every warbler's note would I recall;
For they are as the varied voice to me
Of silver-throated love: nor would I fail
To tell each golden butterfly and moth and bee,
And every honied flower that yields them jubilee.

But the beloved form of old or young
Is dear by reason of the soul within.
By none, methinks, hath thine been duly sung,
Mother of many bards! nor could I win
So difficult a laurel; my meek muse
Would press a reverent finger on her lip:
Yet a brief tribute will she not refuse
To thee, thou best of Universities!
Thy heart is with the goodly fellowship

Of lofty things: Breath from the glowing Skies
Inspires thee for thy work, thine aim and enterprize.

True to thy motto, with "the Lord thy Light,"
The outflow of thine inner fount of life
Glides on as Eden's fourfold river, bright
With a reflected Heaven: the rippling strife
Of thine activity is golden from the beams
Of an eternal Sun; and our low-lying land
Is blest by thine invigorating streams.
Mesopotamia is our Britain: thine
Are the fresh rivulets on every hand
That bid it blossom and bear fruit Divine,
And for whose living power both Heaven and Earth
combine.

But let me to my simile return:
Thy soul is dual as thy form—both age
And youth in her employment I discern;
Thine ancient lore, thy classic heritage,
That grand apotheosis of the Past,
And inspiration from a faded heaven,
The immemorial things thou holdest fast,
Thy calm routine, and self-complacent round
Betoken hoary age; and yet the leaven
Of youthful ferment in thee oft hath crowned
With triumph due reform whereon dull age hath
frowned.

O that the battle between age and youth
Within thy soul were to more purpose fought—
More in the cause of Virtue, Right, and Truth,
Less for mere antique subtleties of thought!

The time-worn love of ease and indolence
That turns full half the year to holiday
Doth hardly chime with modern view and sense;
And if it did, 'tis thine to lead and teach,
To set the time, to be before the day;
And thine, to bring within the common reach
The hidden lights of Thought, of Art, of Song, of Speech.

Builder of poets' sepulchres! why dost
Thou not take timely heed from past neglect?
What! lift dead reputations from the dust,
When, living, thou might'st win them due respect?
Justice and Truth endow thee with due light;
Why leave them in the dark to fade and die?
If seers and thinkers had but common right,
Would any wither like a sunless flower?
A singer perish out of Oxford? No,
It cannot be! Yet Oxford hath the power
To bid exotics that delight her blow
Within a garden fair, kissed by a golden glow.

And should we fail of our ancestral claim?
Doth not thy motto mission thee to much
Which to neglect would mar thy Christian fame?
To renovate the Dogma out of touch
With what to-day's large outlook deems the Truth
High Heaven equips thee! for the power to change,
Remodel and reform, is in thy youth,
While the conserving hold is in thine age.
For this the Oxford in our Church might range
The realm of Science and the sacred Page,
And charm the truant creeds back to their heritage.

And then thy giant power thou couldst employ
To stay the tide whose flow doth shame our day,
Whelming the landmarks between man and boy,
And Right and Wrong—the conflict of vain play
That wastes the ardour meant to move mankind;
The love of sport which agonizes those
Dumb lives wherewith our own are intertwined;
The lust for War, that can but keep alive
The doomed distinction between friends and foes.
Teacher of Truth! if Englishmen must strive,
Fire them with holy zeal that naught of these survive!

Throned on the shore of Culture and true Thought
Play King Canute to the fast-rising tide,
And watching Britons shall be timely taught,
And the rude waves retire for all their pride!
They will not scorn thee if He be thy Light,
Thy Strength, Who is not disobeyed,
Who saith to seas that mock a monarch's might
"Thus far, no further shall ye go; for here
At My command, shall your proud waves be stayed."
Then, too, within the academic sphere
Should not high Honour bid one blot quite disappear?

Doth it beseem thy chivalry of old,
Thy vaunted logic too, that the weak sex
(Whom now thy grace or justice doth enfold)
Should run an equal race to find that checks
On them alone bar out the winner's prize?
O doth it need a high prophetic gift,
An outlook keen, to mark the twilit rise
Of woman? Be it as a sun to gild
Our dawning day, or as a moon to lift

The mists wherewith our night had else been filled—
Her inequality of lot is nigh fulfilled.

And we, who glory in our Colonies,
And on whose ear Imperial echoes chime,
Would fain behold a little Oxford rise
From thee in every Briton-haunted clime,
True to the old tradition, thou and they
In links of literary empire one.
And let the Light that fires thee shed a ray
Of beauty on our city-life at home,
To cheer the prisoned masses; for the Sun
That brightens all beneath the open Dome
Doth bid a golden beam into the chamber roam.

But hold! the Nemesis of all who dream
Hath followed me, and stopped the clock of Time.
The Oxford of my day hath been the theme
Too largely of my over daring rhyme.
Should I forget how nobly thou since then
Hast risen to thy Heaven-born destiny?
But doth the skylark choose his music when
He soars? tho' dropped to earth he may recall
Some cadence as unworthy of the sky:
That do I now—and yet perchance not all
The burden of my song is wild or whimsical.

But even so, the magic Memory weaves
Is over thee, fair Oxford! charm and grace
Of all that may have marred them she bereaves.
The lines of beauty on full many a face
I now recall, but hardly one defect.

The faults, I have forgotten, in the soul
Of each I loved; the spell, I recollect—
The virtues, and the fascinating ways.
So linger with me thou—a varied whole
Toned down and softened by a hallowing haze,
Thou summer-misted dream, thou haunt of golden rays!

ANTICIPATION.

MORE pure delight is in the herald morn
Than in the glitter that the noon doth yield:
More vernal joy of budding leaf is born
Than of the open foliage of the field.

So the true happiness of life doth rise
More from the prophecy than from the quest:
And less than either from the captured prize;
Hope, not fruition, doth enshrine our best.

Then, too, the terrors of the night appal
Most while the glowing sunset fire doth fade;
The winter-dread lurks in the leafy fall,
To vanish mid the naked lane and glade.

And so the shock of numbing grief we feel
Less than we felt the thought of it at first;
'Tis with us in our woe as in our weal;
Fear, not endurance, doth contain our worst.

THE SUM OF DUTY.

From birth,
Thro' gradual life
What doth thy manhood ask
Of thee, ordained to rise from earth
To Heaven, thro' light and shadow, calm and strife?
Self-conquest, and the due fulfilment of thy task,
Truth, honour, mercy, love, and holy dread;
The play of every power, remembering
The brevity of mortal breath:
And then to bow thy head
Before thy King
In death.

PLEDGES OF ETERNITY.

SUCH bitter with our sweet is ever blent
That at the summit of our joy we sigh:
What need? if restlessness and discontent
Be tokens of our immortality?

The sons of Time would feel its food suffice;
The heirs of Earth would bask in her delight;
No serpent could despoil their paradise,
No sadness tinge their calm, no wrong their right.

The clouds that melt into the tranquil blue
Are full of tears, and hurry on apace:
The billows foam and fret as if they knew
Their destiny were ocean's calm embrace.

The empty longing, the unsated love,
The very sin that levels thee to earth,
Are but the title-deeds to Rest above,
If thou be true to thine eternal Birth.

Thy sigh should not be as the gathering gale,
But like the breeze that heralds a fair day:
Thy tears, each rainbow-hued, like drops that fail
When sunlight triumphs thro' the morning-grey.

TO A DAPHNE.[1]

WHAT here, and out this wintry morn,
Thou who didst once Apollo scorn,
Now in arboreal state reborn
To virginal delight!
And is thy pedigree forgot,
The pathos of thy former lot,
That one a river-god begot
Can flower in such a site?

[1] Daphne, according to the legend, was a daughter of the river-god Peneus, and was beloved by Apollo. Deaf to his suit, and flying from him, she besought her father or Jupiter to protect her. Her prayer was heard, and she was changed into a laurel. A little early flowering plant of that tribe which goes by her name is here referred to.

Here from a bleak unwatered bed
Doth spring a fair and delicate head,
So bright when sister shrubs are dead
  That I can feel no doubt
Thine is the true Lethean bliss:
But hold—by Juno! what is this?
A warm embrace, a fiery kiss
  From sunshine blazing out!

Didst thou then fool the Power above
Who deemed thee a pure helpless dove,
And changed thee to escape a love
  Abhorrent to thy heart?
Ah! fickle Nymph, so like the sex
Men charm to-day, to-morrow vex,
The sun-god, mocking wiles and checks,
  Now wins thee at a dart.

Hence didst thou so divinely rise,
The earliest to seek the skies
With face of innocent surprise,
  Shy joy, and flushing hope?
'Tis thine to prove, triumphant flower,
That Love can sway the mightiest Power!
More sunshine be thy petals' dower,
  More beauty as they ope.

A REVERIE ON LIFE.

WHY are we here?
Why thus? Why fettered till the mortal hour,
Dupes of bright hope, and slaves of dusky fear,
Tried past all power?

Doth a young soul
Reach ripeness thro' one frame, one testing-time?
Earth's sweet sad music, can it be the whole
Of the set chime?

Nay, let me deem
Life but an epoch in the spirit's growth;
With ampler period at one extreme,
Maybe at both:

The overture
Begun, of some grand oratorio:
Tentative notes, feeble and immature,
Now loud, now low:

A solo sung
To give effect to melody before;
Or fuller tone to an untutored tongue
Destined for more.

An interlude
Mid some enchanting movement that will end
In song, wherein the human multitude
Shall ever blend.

How many fade
Like morning clouds into the boundless blue!
Earth's wisdom half unlearned, the soul is paid
But half her due.

How many cling
Like autumn fruitage long, yet fall unripe!
But in the end, can children of a King
Fail of the Type?

Some, true and fair,
Look fresh from a pure ante-natal home:
Some live as tho' the fiend had trained them ere
On Earth they roam:

None die too good
To be unbettered by strange discipline:
None die so bad but that they may be wooed
At length from sin.

Too brief the stay
Of all for the equipment of a heart—
What soul her due divinity can pay
Ere she depart?

Oft, what is life?
One peep at splendour thro' an opening door;
One drill with soldiery aflame for strife;
One pull to Shore:

Withhold thy tears
O'er powers that find no scope for their employ!
The field is waiting, past these empty years
Of woe and joy.

Weep if thou wilt
For moral loss, and failure to attain!
But know thy life, for all its wrong and guilt,
Hath not been vain.

Who ordered it
Had one great aim; one thing was to be done;
And ere thou vanish hence, the mark is hit;
The object won.

Some crookedness
Had to be straightened at whatever price;
Thy tale of years for that, no more no less,
May just suffice.

What if in all
Beside, thou have degraded and lost ground?
Hereafter means to lift thee from that fall
May yet be found.

How many a piece
Is overlooked in chess, the queen to gain!
And so to make thy crowning evil cease
Much may remain.

Yet strive and weep—
Weep for thy Past, and in the Future strive!
Sure but of this, that from Death's nearing sleep
Thou wilt revive.

LOVE'S THREEFOLD ASPECT.

LOVE hath faces three—one turns
Toward the Earth where passion burns:
Far too ample he to shun
Any two that would be one.
Form hath favour with him where
Feeling doth the empire share:
Even on that lowly plane
He alighting may remain.

Heavenward another face
Ever looks, as one whose grace
Owes all beauty to the bright
Splendour of a formless Light—
Of a Joy unvisioned, save
By the souls who, pure and brave,
Live above the mortal birth
That hath fettered form to Earth.

Then a third face fronts the hell,
Where sin, woe and hatred dwell.
More Divine that gaze of Love
Even than the look above—
Never more so than when sighs
Of regard win hating eyes.
Starved of fuel, yet aflame,
Love doth best deserve the name.

A SONG OF THORNS.

THERE is a pathos in yon scene
  Of beauty and of blight:
Mid roses gay, and foliage green
  Sharp prickles mock delight.
O why, when shoots were wild with hope,
Did dew and sunshine some unope,
And others leave to vainly cope
  With the keen tempest's spite?

Ah! who can say? I only know
  'Tis thus within the soil
That yieldeth sungilt hopes—some blow,
  And some, bleak whirlwinds spoil.
For every rosy dream fulfilled
One faintly flushes, to be chilled:
And loves that charmed, and joys that thrille.
  Oft sharpen in recoil.

Young thoughts upspringing intertwine;
  And each sad heart can tell
That *this* is shaped by heavenly shine,
  And *that* by gusts from hell:
Hot efforts kindled by one spark
Upflame to win the holy mark,
Or fade into an emblem dark
  Of evil's dwarfing spell.

And ah! the world-wide mystery,
  The bright, the joyless, brood—

That twofold outcome of life's tree,
The evil and the good!
Nor only that tho' many smile,
As many frown and fret the while,
With no nepenthe to beguile
The bleak and bitter mood—

Not this alone, but that the life
Is parent of the guise:
Some, militant mid gale and strife,
Unfold to the pure skies:
Some yield to sloth, nor covet grace,
Until a keen ignoble face
Reveals a spirit hard, and base,
Bereft of power to rise.

And yet, tho' Nature's double yield
Lend symmetry to earth,
And flower and thorn each other shield,
Nor either fail of worth;
The nobler self repels the thought
That our sad world hath so been wrought,
Nor brooks that shame can cling to aught
Which knew a heavenly birth.

True Rose of Sharon, why steal down
Our valley to adorn?
And why uplift and wear the crown
Of curse, and pain, and scorn?
Why but to charm our tears away?
Thy wreath of sorrow knew decay
To show that life shall yield one day
The rose without the thorn.

DAYLIGHT AND DARKNESS.

LAUGH, laugh, for the glory of earth,
The beauty, the joy and the cheer!
For age's content, the young music and mirth,
Laugh awhile, yet keep many a tear!
Doth never the sunset bequeath
Wind and rain to the scene of delight,
As tho' paling day ere he vanish would breathe
A lament for the fast-falling night?

Weep, weep, for the sorrow of life,
The evil, the care, and the pain!
For the passionate grief, empty effort, and strife,
Weep, weep, yet laugh quickly again!
If the vapours of night leave their mark,
In the drops that bedew the earth's face,
The fire-fronted morn that hath conquered the dark
Dries them up to leave never a trace.

A CRITICISM OF LIFE.

TIME'S hoary prodigal, the Past,
From the great Now of life off cast,
Doth wear a half eternal glow
The while it silvers on below.

The Future too, the heir of Time,
Doth borrow from a heavenly clime
The glory of the babe unborn,
The promise of the reddening morn.

But rarely doth the Present seem
Lit up with a supernal gleam;
Yet in its fleeting vain employ
We find apology for joy.
Too oft we shun the Past, for *there*
Is no intoxicating fare;
Nor quaff that balm for tears and sighs
The Future's cordial prophecies.

Our outlook is the zone of grey
Which links past night and coming day;
This silvered by a tender moon;
That fired by golden sunbeams soon.
We on the middle darkness brood
And shun Hope's wine, and Memory's food,
The native cheer, the fertile source
Of healing thro' the mortal course.

The spirit hath two faces; one
Views by-gones—all felt, said, and done:
On that soft scene—a moonlit haze
Toned down, and tempered—it doth gaze:
The other turns toward the all
That is to be, the magical
Unfolding of the day divine,
That opens with prophetic shine.

Thus Janus-like she fronts the two
Whence we our forces may renew.

The Present she doth hardly face,
So thick the veil of Time and Space.
Before, her eyes are, and behind;
Yet nothing can her vision blind;
For many a back or forward glance
Doth pierce the shadowy expanse:

Eternity! From thy twin wealth
Of Past and Future flows our health.
This phantom care, and spectral strife,
And ghostly glory, are not life:
Mere fictions of illuding sense
They offer us for truth, pretence.
What is, they veil by what doth seem;
And we prefer the empty dream!

TO A DAFFODIL.[1]

THOU golden dreamer by the water side,
At sight of thee is many a fancy born!
Thou beamest like the sun, in glowing pride,
On ocean's answering wave some happy morn.

[1] Narcissus, according to mythology, was beloved of all the maidens and nymphs around for his surpassing beauty. Echo pined away to a mere voice, because of him. Tiresias the seer predicted that he would live to old age, if he should not become acquainted with himself. Being heated one day in the chase, he went to drink from a fountain, and there saw for the first time the reflection of his own loveliness. Nothing could turn the unhappy youth from this fountain, and his raging passion for himself destroyed him; the gods transformed him into a yellow flower, of which the daffodil is a species.

Like yellow China, thou dost progress scorn:
Wind-swept, thou wilt to a vain image bow,
Like Israel to the golden calf: lovelorn
And pensive like a nymph thou lookest now;
Or Naiad who would bathe beneath a screening bough.

And thou wast human once! a sunny youth,
By many a maiden idolized and wooed;
Beloved of fainting Echo to her ruth;
A mighty hunter, yet thyself pursued
By a strange fortune thou couldst not elude,
Which led thee hot and weary to the spring,
That imaged forth thy bright similitude;
Whereto, O self-enamoured! thou didst cling
Till all thy manly grace became the flower I sing.

O wealth of loveliness, O golden blaze!
Had I but half thy charm, I too might bend
By some reflecting pool, and gaze, and gaze,
And all my manhood on self-glory spend,
Truly the gods who changed thee did befriend
All who, like me, are hot from Beauty's chase;
For in yon limpid lake, and this fair blend
Of flower and clear reflection is a grace
Beyond what I behold in my self-conscious Race.

Vain self-idolaters! (like him of old
Adored on Dura, and who in a dream
Saw his own glory in the head of gold)
With faces bowed to a reflecting stream
The gods chain each of us to self-esteem.
Kin, country, creed, all that we hold most dear,
From self alone derive their worth supreme.
Ah me! may all who in the mirror peer
Find charms, bright egoist! like those that greet me here.

THE END.

SAD words, if they be knelling love or life,
Or aught that hath begun with promise fair!
Glad words, if they be told of pain or strife,
And bid the heart for better things prepare!

Words sad and glad to all who thread the maze
Where pain doth end in pleasure, light in shade;
Who, cheered by joyful, charmed by tender lays,
Hear many a one begin, another fade.

A warbler now his melody hath hushed,
Sad would he feel if none should miss the voice;
Glad, if to hear it but one face hath flushed
And thro' its music but one heart rejoice.

Tho' mid life's labyrinth one note may well
And wisely stop, if other carols blend:
Be many a haunting echo a sure spell
To conjure up delight that hath no end.

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